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LECTURES

ON

The History of England.

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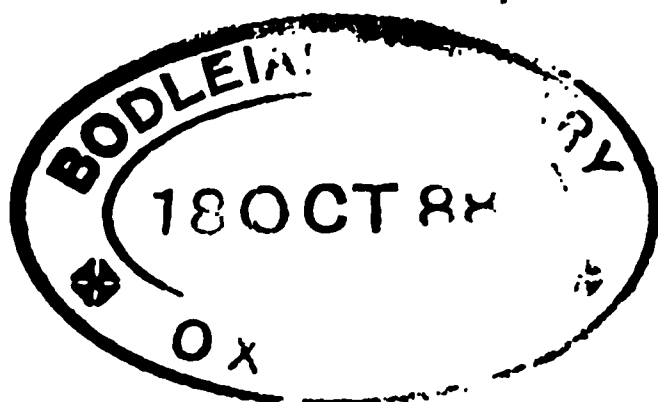
BY A LADY.

FROM THE ROMAN INVASION, B.C. 55.
TO
THE NORMAN CONQUEST, A.D. 1066.

VOL. I.

LITTLEMORE:
ALEX. AMBROSE MASSON;
AND SOLD BY
J. H. PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.
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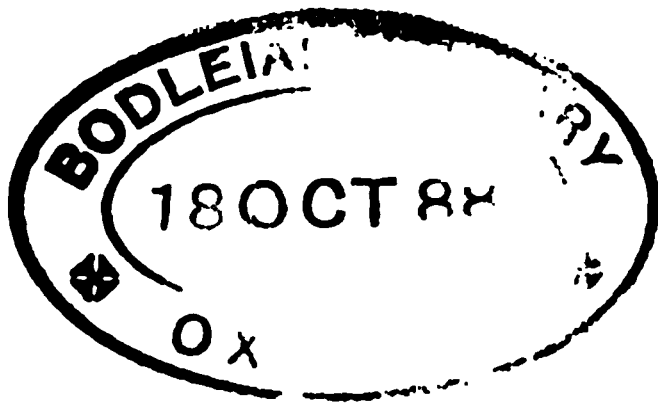


LITTLEMORE:
PRINTED BY ALEXANDER AMBROSE MASSON.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.



THE history of Saxon England has been generally considered as too little known, and too full of those rather physical than moral revolutions that belong to a barbarous state of society, to present matter of great interest to ordinary readers. It must be allowed that the wars of the Heptarchy appear somewhat irregular and tumultuary, and that the state of society was often so disorganized as to preclude the exhibition of the great principles of policy or legislation. But there were elements at work through the whole period which must be understood by every one who would understand history, and which too many historians not only neglect but depreciate. The object of the following Lectures is to give due prominence to these, and, at the



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THE history of Saxon England has been generally considered as too little known, and too full of those rather physical than moral revolutions that belong to a barbarous state of society. It presents matter of great interest to numerous readers. It must be allowed that the reigns of the Sontarchy appear somewhat irregular and tumultuary, and that the state of society was often so disorganised as to preclude the exhibition of the great principles of justice or legislation. But there were, however, a work through the whole period which must be understood by every one who would understand history, and which the many historians have not neglected to demonstrate. The object of the following Lecture is to present a clear and accurate view of the state of society in these and the following

same time, by a lively manner of sketching the several incidents, to impress the whole history on the memory and imagination. They are in substance the work of a lady who has devoted a considerable length of time both to the study of the longer historians of recent date, and to that of many early chronicles. Some little discretion has been exercised in revision, with the author's consent, but the main character of the work has not been materially altered, and most of the details remain as originally written.

The aim has not been, in any great degree, original research, but rather such a use of the well-known materials as might place the principal incidents vividly before the eye, and explain the action of the Church in leavening society, and the pious efforts of holy men in Church and State, as well as the achievements of statesmen and warriors. It is hoped that something has been done toward enabling the youthful reader to realise the part and place of British

Christians in the great array of the armies of the Living God, and to follow through history the lines of action, and to mark the points of conflict, in which man's highest duties and interests have been concerned.

The reader must not expect to find all histories agree with what is here presented. There are in some cases conflicting statements, amongst which it has been necessary to make choice. In other instances modern historians have dealt freely in conjecture, and have confidently asserted what they had no grounds for believing, but that it seemed to account for facts, and to accord with *their* view of characters.

It has been the wish of the author to give conjecture as conjecture, and only to state as if certain what is at least attested by credible ancient witnesses. But there may be cases here, as in other books, in which imagination has given too strong a tone of confidence, and feeling has overpast the limits of certainty. In such cases, how-

ever, the reader will still find what was the author's sincere and deliberate conviction, after the perusal of numerous accounts, and what has been assumed as fairly representing the upshot of the evidence as we have it. No small benefit will be gained if the young student is enabled to remember and take interest in the early history of our country, and is taught to exercise the mind on it, and prepared for the more intelligent perusal of larger works and original documents.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is now my intention, my young friends, to enter upon a very interesting branch of study, the study of History, and to begin with the history of our own country. I need hardly tell you that the history of any country contains the narrative of all the great events that have happened there, as far as we have any record of them ; of all the emperors, kings, or queens, who have reigned in that country, and the way in which they governed it, what laws they made, what battles they fought, what remarkable people lived during their reigns, and what discoveries took place.

And there is much besides in the history of any country, and most of all of our own, to awaken our interest, for in reading of men as they were, that is, as they thought, felt, and acted many years ago, we may take lessons for our own guidance now ; we may learn that human nature was the same then as now, that some men were proud, others ambitious, others violent and rapacious, while there were always a few who were self-denying, virtuous, and holy ; and such reflections ought to make us very thoughtful and serious, for if the records of past times do not improve us, they will surely lead our minds away from truth. Take an example of what I mean. One who is ambitious will learn from the study of history to wish for power, rank,

and wealth, instead of seeing how useless, nay, how mischievous, to have them without the fear of God : a cruel person will rejoice in reading of dreadful crimes, instead of feeling pained and shocked at them ; a war-like person will delight in battles and victories, without stopping to consider who was in the right as to the cause of the war, the victor or the vanquished, or whether so much bloodshed need have taken place at all. On the other hand, the thoughtful and serious will try to find out which were the brightest characters of any reign, and what were the greatest actions. By great actions, I mean actions worthy of praise. Such will observe how true it is that sin always brings to the sinner a miserable punishment, sooner or later ; they will be taught perseverance, by remarking how many clever people have gained their ends in life through never giving up, although opposed by immense and seemingly insurmountable difficulties ; and they will not fail to be impressed with the solemn truth, that the crimes of a nation or of their king, may bring that nation into danger and destruction, and cause pain and misery not only to the people alive then, but to their innocent children and grandchildren yet unborn. All these thoughts will lead them to feel and to know that no nation can be really happy, or prosperous, or great, unless God is feared in that nation, and His laws are in the hearts of the people.

Now this last is the spirit in which I wish you to study the history of your country, if you would gain any good from it : for knowledge, unless we make a right use of it, is a dangerous possession, and it is always better to be without learning, than to learn with-



out becoming wiser. I am speaking of wisdom in the Bible sense, which is the only true sense, and which makes it to begin with the “fear of God.”

There are some very beautiful verses on wisdom in the “Book of Wisdom,” which I will read to you : they will shew you to what a blessed state of feeling true wisdom leads, not all at once but by progressive steps or stages.

“Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away : yea she is easily seen of them that love her, and found of such as seek her.

“She preventeth them that desire her : in making herself first known unto them. .

“Whoso seeketh her early shall have no great travail : for he shall find her sitting at his doors.

“To think therefore upon her is the perfection of wisdom : and whoso watcheth for her shall quickly be without care.

“For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her : sheweth herself favourably to them in the ways, and meeteth them in every thought.

“For the very true beginning of her is the desire of discipline : and the care of discipline is love.

“And love is the keeping of her laws : and the giving heed unto her laws is the assurance of incorruption.

“And incorruption maketh us near unto God.

“Therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to a kingdom.*”

So then it would seem that to be wise, even in the history of your own country, and to study it to any useful purpose, you must desire wisdom in the Bible

* Wisdom vi. 12—21.

sense of it, and bring to the study a humble and pure heart, with a simple earnest intention to enter upon it in a tractable spirit, and to pay strict attention to every moral truth which you may gain therefrom : and this leads me to set before you another class of thoughts which you should cultivate in reading the history of a people : viz. such as shall arise from following out at the same time the *fortunes* of the Church in that nation, and remarking how they were brightened or dimmed by the events of different reigns. For it is impossible to reflect on the state of any nation in any period of its existence without seeing plainly that as the true faith prevailed or languished, so the Divine favour blessed that country or was withdrawn from it. Besides which, a member of the holy Church should always take an interest in all that concerns her welfare, and should love to trace her progress in Christianizing mankind : whence he will be brought to acknowledge one eternal and glorious truth, that the might of sinful men, even if in exalted station, their anger, their hatred, and their persecutions, the wealth and power of nations, their fleets and armaments, are all vain weapons against the Kingdom of the Most High, which shall grow and endure for ever, and only suffer in her children as heaven permits for a trial of their faith and love, and for the purification of their earthly nature.

Nor will he fail to remark that these hours of trial are to the Church the seasons in which her light, like that of the blazing beacon, becomes more vividly distinct, because of the darkness by which it is everywhere surrounded : for, as among human beings, a hard life makes a hardy and vigorous frame, so in the spi-

ritual growth of the soul, a constant struggle against the world's scorn braces the nerves of the mind, and gives energy for the most heroic virtues : while those who, as in the case of many in these days, only know the luxuries of religious worship, only profess a faith which all around them would be ashamed of denying, are too often without any fixed religious affections, and are disturbed and unsettled by every trifle that opposes itself to their wayward inclinations.

You must not be surprised then if, in the course of these lectures, I often quit the history of this realm for that of the Church within it : blending the two together where I am able, but separating them into sections or parts where it seems necessary to the full sense of my teaching. For I hold it to be capable of proof, that any history of a people must be imperfect, and convey imperfect ideas to the mind, unless the growth of religion among that people, and the way in which their lives and actions were affected by it, be clearly set forth therein. And having made you understand this, I will go on at once to the subject of our stories,—the History of this Island from the earliest times in which we are able to learn any thing certainly concerning it down to the present day.

LECTURE I.

You must all know what a common is, for there are still many unenclosed ; and those among you who have travelled in Scotland, Ireland, or the West of England, may have seen the large tracts of oak brushwood which are probably the remains of the ancient forests of this country, and which are the natural growth of the soil.

At the time when these Islands of Great Britain and Ireland were first visited by the Romans, the whole of the country was covered with this kind of forest, or broken into open pasture like our commons ; except in some places where the rivers and streams overflowed their banks and formed large bogs or fens. These morasses were very extensive, and could not often be crossed without a guide ; but, notwithstanding that there were many of these bogs, the country as a whole must have been very green and beautiful in the summer months, and the vast^a unbroken woods, with bright glades of mossy turf winding in and out between them, the deep tranquil vallies, and clear rushing streams wandering among the hills, must have filled the first conquerors of the soil with admiration, even though they had left such fair scenes behind them in their own Italy.

I am speaking of the Romans, for the date of their

^a "The vast forest, called by some 'Anderidan,' and by others 'the Caledonian,' stretches from 'Cantium' (Kent) an hundred and fifty miles. It is thus mentioned by the poet Lucan," (Phars. vi. 68) :—"Unda Caledonios fallit turbata Britannos."—*Richard of Cirencester*.

invasion of this country is made by most writers the period of the commencement of our Island history, yet very early historians make the inhabitants to be descendants of the Trojans, and one^b gives us a list of British kings which goes back far beyond the Christian era : but this is more matter for the enquiry of the curious than of profitable study to ourselves ; so entirely is it uncertain how much of his narrative is true and how much of it is fabulous, besides that the details of which it is composed have scarcely a feature of interest for our times.^c

We do not hear that the coast of Britain was much visited before the year 55 B.C. A few merchants ventured over occasionally, in quest of minerals and other articles of commerce, but their traffic was confined chiefly to the coasts.^d Between the inhabitants of Gaul and Britain a friendly intercourse had long existed, the religion, or rather the idolatry, of both countries being the same. Yet it is remarkable that instead of ancient Gaul having carried her superstitious rites across to Britain, Britain is said to have been the instructor of Gaul on these points, and the great seat or centre of all the Druid mysteries, to which the youth of other countries were sometimes sent to be edu-

^b Geoffrey of Monmouth, who lived in the reign of Henry I. and whose History is a translation from an ancient MS. in the British tongue, which is said to be still extant.—*See preface to Dr. Giles' Translation.*

^c It is interesting to know that Shakespear drew the character of King Lear and his daughter from this source.

^d One argument against the authenticity of any account of Britain before the Romans landed, is that the art of letters was unknown to the inhabitants until the introduction by the Romans ; but this can be disproved. Mr. Williams, in the "*Cymry*," speaks of the custom among the Druids of inscribing sentences on pieces of wood, which were called the "*Token Sticks*" of the bards, and which was superseded by the use of the roll, or parchment, brought from Rome, by "*Bran the Blessed*," besides which, as Marseilles was a colony of the Greeks, and as ancient Gaul and Britain kept up communication with each other, it is not likely that the latter should have remained entirely ignorant of letters.

cated.* The gods of the Druids were the same as those adored in other parts of Europe, viz. the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva. There was also a strong resemblance between some of their religious ceremonies and those of the Egyptians, and the most marked feature in their religion was the existence of immense Serpent Temples, where the Sun and the Serpent-god were worshipped together. These Temples were formed by the placing of huge stones at different distances from each other in a certain form ; and the manner in which they were set up is still unexplained. I believe, however, that the Druids were not ignorant of the laws of mechanical science.†

It is a fact worthy of attention that there is no country in the world where serpents have not been worshipped at one time or another ; which proves that the tradition, or remembrance handed down from father to son, of the Fall, and of the malice of the Evil One, or Great Serpent, was universally known, and had been carried into the most remote quarters of the globe. All people inherited, as it were, a dread of his great and awful power ; all, save the children of the Light, were taught to propitiate or bribe him, by giving him a share of the worship due to their Creator. In most nations he was adored rather as an emblem or symbol of the Divinity than as a god ; in some countries, as in Britain, live serpents were kept in the Temples, and carefully fed by the priests ; and in many places, as in Egypt, Greece, Gaul and Britain, the Temples of the Sun were also

* See Collier's Eccles. Hist. page 3, and Deane on serpent worship, page 278. "The chief seat of the Druidical religion, however, was Britain," &c. quoting Cæsar, vi. 14.

† Geoffry of Monmouth, viii. 10.

Serpent Temples, being made in the form of a serpent, having a great circle or main inclosure, where the idolatrous rites were held in honour of the Sun-god, and from thence a long winding avenue of stones, ending in a smaller circle, which was said to represent the body and tail of the serpent.

The Druids in Britain wore flowing robes and beards, which gave them a dignified and venerable appearance ; but the natives were without any covering but the skins of wild beasts, nay, they even disfigured their bodies by painting them of different colours, thus shewing how completely the higher part of their nature was degraded and enslaved.

The Druids seem to have been divided into three ranks. They had a head, or chief priest, second to him came the other priests, and there was a third class, or the bards, who were lawgivers and scholars, and generally of high rank, and who taught the learning of the country, in a species of song, or wise saying, called a Triad.^s The principles professed by the bards were “to search after truth,” and “adhere rigidly to justice and peace.” Their Triads, which they learned by heart, were the origin of the early poetry of the country ; three things were mentioned in each, and there is both wisdom and ingenuity in these sayings, besides which many of them, particularly the later ones, give information on obscure points of history. Yet the learning of the Druids does not appear to have made the people either civilized or happy ; it was more like the knowledge of the sorcerers of old ; and doubtless the great deceiver of man, the serpent, to whom homage

^s Mr. Williams “The Cymry.”

was daily paid in the sacred groves, knew how to turn any light they possessed into darkness ; for we find the most shocking and barbarous customs universally practised, both by the priests and the people, human victims offered up in sacrifice, morality and purity unknown, insults openly avenged, and rapine and plunder permitted and often countenanced. All the prisoners taken in war were burned in idols made of wicker-work, or they had their entrails torn out while yet living, that they might be examined for omens and signs of coming events, or of the will of the gods.

There is one point alone in the Druid character which demands our respect and imitation, and that is, their moderation. They lived like ascetics ; their food was acorns and herbs, and their drink water ; and by thus gaining the mastery over their appetites, they gained also the respect and veneration of their followers, who looked upon them as superior to human weaknesses, and revered them almost as Divine. Now I would not wish to be mistaken when I hold up the Druid priests to your imitation ; I do not mean that you had better live upon herbs and acorns, but to draw your thoughts to the fact that every victory over sense, that is, over our fleshly appetites, besides being an act of self-denial, is one that gives us influence with our fellow-Christians. We naturally look up to those who can control *themselves*, and believe in the sincerity of a man who will sacrifice his comforts to bring his will into obedience to his principles.

There is a very perfect Druid temple, or rather the remains of one, at Abury in Wiltshire, and another at Stanton Drew, in Somersetshire. The Dartmoor wilds

abound with traces of this great and terrible superstition, and in Wales, Cornwall, and the Channel Islands, these monuments of the past are mingled in and out with the memories of the first Saints and Martyrs, in the scenes of their early teaching.

You would have felt, I think, as I did, full of deep thankfulness, had you visited a lonely churchyard in Guernsey, near the sea coast. On a high and wave-beaten cliff, surrounded by the quiet graves of those who rest in hope of the Resurrection, there is a group of these gigantic stones. In their lofty position, crowning the hill, they are soon perceived; but throned above them, as if in triumph, stands one of the oldest churches in the island, and when the sun rises and gilds the steeple of that ancient sanctuary, it throws a deep shadow on the Pagan altar at its feet:—meet emblem of the victory of the light over the false and fleeting fabric of human darkness.

But it is time to speak of the natives of this country when it was first invaded by the Romans. I have given you a sketch of their religion, I will now tell you something of their appearance, manner of fighting, and general habits. In appearance they were tall and well made, and most of them had hair of a golden colour. They lived to a great age, generally to one hundred, or one hundred and twenty years.^h Their chiefs wore, many of them, a bar of gold round the neck, and beads of a curious make and material were worn as charms, and believed to be formed of the foam of serpents. These beads are in reality nothing but glass, and they are still found in digging

^h Rapin. Intr. p. xvi. from Plutarch, *De Placitis*, v. 30.

near the Druid Temples, and called by the inhabitants snake-stones.

The ancient Britons fought on foot, on horseback, and in chariots with sharp spears projecting from the sides. These they drove furiously through the midst of their enemies, the spears causing frightful wounds in all who came against them. "They were so expert in driving these chariots, as to hold up their horses in steep descents, to check and turn them suddenly at full speed, to run along the pole, stand on the yoke, and then spring back into the chariot.¹" Their horses were small but active: the Exmoor and Hampshire ponies are supposed to be the wild descendants of the original horses of this country. Besides the spears in their chariots, they used for defence a buckler, a poniard, and a short lance, at the lower end of which was a piece of tin shaped like an apple, for the purpose of making a noise and frightening their enemies.² Their houses, or rather huts, were made of skins, covered over with the boughs of trees, and wattled, that is, fastened together by willow bands: thus their cities had little to distinguish them from the mounds of turf, or coppice woods, by which they were surrounded. According to the account given by Cæsar, they had begun to till the land, and possessed vast herds of cattle. Those in the south were colonists from Gaul, and more civilised than the natives of the midland districts.¹

When Julius Cæsar first landed in Britain he was flushed with victory, for he had been overrunning Gaul with an army, and had been everywhere successful, which made him wish to add our island to his other

¹ Richard of Cirencester.

² Dion Cassius.

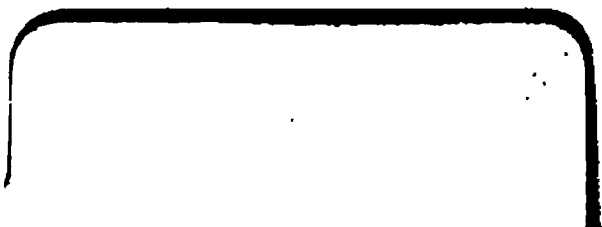
¹ Cæsar, Book v. c. 5.

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conquests. The Romans were at this time the most powerful people in the world. The countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia, that border on the Mediterranean Sea had become their provinces, or were their dependant allies, all owning the power of the one city of Rome, and paying tribute to it. Its generals were still pushing forward their conquests, and thus that great power was being built up, and had by this time nearly reached its greatness, which was afterwards called the Roman Empire. Julius Cæsar was one of those who most contributed to extend its limits and strengthen its dominion.

Julius Cæsar is said to have disembarked his troops at Deal, near Dover, on the Kentish coast. After fighting several battles, in most of which he was successful, he withdrew his troops, requiring from the Britons that they should send hostages to the capital to prove their submission to the Roman eagles ; and this they had agreed to do.

The custom of giving hostages is very old. You will remember that it is even spoken of in the book of Genesis, where Simeon is mentioned as being retained as a hostage in Joseph's house, to ensure the return to Egypt of the rest of his brethren, and Benjamin.

Such hostages were generally individuals of rank, who, as relatives or sons of their princes and favourite leaders, were held in esteem by the people. The object of retaining them in the enemies' country was, that, in case of a rebellion of the conquered people, their conquerors had the power of punishing them, by putting to death or otherwise maltreating their hostages.

But the Britons, finding that Cæsar had left their

shores, grew bold again, and failed to send the hostages at the time appointed. This led to another expedition against them on his part; and now he was met by large bodies of the natives, armed at all points, and burning to punish his intrusion and maintain their freedom. They had chosen Cassivelaunus as their leader, a man of much valour, and one of the most powerful of their princes.

But although the ancient Britons were brave, they were not a match in fighting for the Romans; for fighting is a science which has its own laws and regulations, and these only educated nations understand. The poor Britons, therefore, had nothing but ignorance and animal courage to oppose to the military skill and trained valour of their enemies. It will be no surprise to you to hear that they were defeated, not once, nor twice, but beaten back from point to point until their cause seemed almost hopeless. It is probable that Julius Cæsar would have remained in Britain to secure his conquest and to plant the Roman power there on a sure foundation, had not the daily increasing troubles in his own country obliged him to return, and so, for nearly one hundred years afterwards, no attempt was made by the Romans to complete the final subjugation of Britain, although straggling parties of them frequently crossed over from Gaul, and penetrated further and further into the interior of the Island. Nor do we find any proofs, that I am aware of, that this intercourse with the refinement of the most civilized people in the world led to any improvement in the manners of the Britons of that early period.

It was now the year of our Redeemer 43, and

Claudius Cæsar was Emperor of Rome. Probably the Romans had seen enough of our country to consider the conquest of so fair a land of much importance ; certain it is that Claudius set his heart upon achieving it, and after sending Placetius with an army to commence hostilities, he shortly followed himself ; when he received in person the submission of several of the southern states, the inhabitants of which, leading a quiet life amongst their flocks and herds, were glad to have peace at any cost. But Caractacus, or Caradog, a brave and spirited leader of the remaining states, made a noble resistance, and although defeated at last, or rather betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and taken to Rome as a prisoner, his great mind remained unconquered, and it is said that his behaviour there won the admiration of all who witnessed it. “ How is it possible,” he exclaimed, “ that people possessed of such magnificence at home can envy me a humble cottage in Britain ?”

Caractacus maintained his position against the Romans during a nine years struggle, and then was only subdued by treachery. He knew that the fate of his kingdom depended upon his last battle, and did all that he could to inspire his men with courage. “ This is the day,” he told them, “ and this is the battle which will prove the beginning either of recovered liberty or of endless slavery.” On this speech of his it has been beautifully remarked,^m that “ though the Britons were defeated, the event was to them truly the commencement of recovered liberty, even the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

^m “ The Cymry.” See Rom. viii. 21.

This brings us to the reign of Nero, the cruel tyrant before whom St. Paul was accused, and under whom he, as well as St. Peter, at last suffered martyrdom. St. Paul's own "fellow-labourer," "whose name" he says^a "is written in the book of life," states that St. Paul preached "even to the utmost bound^f of the west," and the like is said by other learned Christian fathers afterwards; but this is a well-known title of Britain. The learned Eusebius, the friend of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, who was born and proclaimed Emperor in Britain, says^o expressly that this Apostle brought the Gospel to Britain. Another learned historian^p mentions the Britons by name. Claudia, of whom, with her husband Pudens, a Roman senator, St. Paul speaks,^q was probably a British lady, whose beauty and talents the heathen admired, but who^r herself sought wisdom from above, and the Tree whose leaf fadeth not. Another lady, whom the heathen owned to be noble in virtues as in descent, the wife of a governor and conqueror of Britain, was tried for her life, A.D. 57, probably for having embraced the Gospel. Our own earliest historian says that "the True Sun cast forth His beams on this Island, that is, Christ gave His laws^s" to us before the great defeat of Boadicea, (of which I shall have to speak), that is before A.D. 61.

It can then hardly be doubted that St. Paul, who foreknew that those at Ephesus should see his face no more, did, during the eight years which passed between his release and his martyrdom, complete his purpose of "taking his journey into Spain, and thence came and

^a Phil. iv. 3. See S. Clem. Ep. 1, § 4. Collyer, p. 5. ^o Dem. Ev. iii.
^p Theodoret T. iv. Sermon. 9. ^q Martial iv. 13.; xi. 54. in Collyer.
^r 2 Tim. iv. 21. ^s Gildas § 8.

preached the Gospel to us also, 'imitating' (as has been said) the Lord, the True Sun of Righteousness, of Whom it is said 'His goings forth are from the end of heaven, and His circuit unto the end thereof,' so that the earth rather failed before him than his zeal to preach the Gospel." And of this the very defeat of Caractacus may have been the means in His Hands Who can turn all our losses into gains.

Caractacus was taken to Rome, and with him all his family; the custom of carrying whole families into captivity being common among hostile nations. There he was a prisoner at the same time with St. Paul, and from him St. Paul may have heard of us and our needs. When he was set at liberty, his release being granted to him on account of his noble bearing and unshaken courage, his father, Bran, was detained as a hostage. Bran remained several years in Rome, and perhaps may have been himself one of St. Paul's converts, for he returned to his own land a Christian. He had been great among his people before his captivity, for he was a bard and a scholar, but he was afterwards greater, for he is recorded in the "Triads" as "Bran the blessed," and his family is spoken of as one of "the three holy families who first taught the faith of Christ."

When Bran returned to Britain he was accompanied by four companions; three of them are called in the Triads "men of Israel," and one Arwystli, a "man of Italy." This Arwystli is considered to be the same with Aristobulus,[†] who is mentioned in Scripture; and St. Paul is said to have ordained him as the first British

[†] Rom. xvi. 10. See Greek Menology. He died A.D. 99, at Glastonbury. He is described in the "Genealogy of the Saints," as the Confessor or Spiritual instructor of Bran.

Bishop. Of the others, Ildid or Iltid has left his name as the founder of the first British Church in Wales, "Llan Iltid,"^u in Glamorganshire, and there he also organized a religious choir or body of twelve holy men. There are no separate memorials of St. Paul's preaching, but his name is attached to a set of Triads, which have been called from the earliest times "Paul's Triads." In saying that Iltid founded the first British Church, I do not mean that he built the first, for the most ancient Christian structure in Wales is supposed to be Llandaff, but that he established regular services at Llan Iltid, and made that part of Glamorganshire a centre from which the clergy were sent to preach and baptize. It is imagined that the new converts worshipped in the Druid circles, turning them into Christian temples. This may easily have been the case, since the Druids and bards were, in many places, among the first to embrace the faith; in support of which I may mention that some of the Druid circles still bear Christian titles, as Carn y Groes, or the Circle of the Cross, Carn Moesen, or the Circle of Moses;^x and the remains of an ancient stone Cross are yet to be seen in the centre of one of them.

It may appear strange that Wales was the principal scene of the labours of the first Christians in Britain, but this may have been caused by the fact that the people had been beaten back into the mountainous parts of the country by the gradual incursions of the Romans among them. Wales, too, seems to have been, from the beginning, a quarter towards which the Roman

^u This Iltid must not be confounded with St. Iltutus, who was a disciple of St. Germanus, and in whose name several Churches are likewise dedicated.

^x This Moses was a Briton, and an apostle of the Saracens. *Cressy.*

arms were attracted, which looks as if the British kings who had rule there were more powerful and formidable than elsewhere ; so that Wales might be the last point of resistance to the Roman power, as it would be the most difficult to retain when gained.

I believe that I have now given you a tolerably authentic account of the planting of the Christian faith in Britain. Another tradition, not so certain, tells us that Joseph of Arimathæa, having crossed to Britain, accompanied by twelve disciples, settled at Glastonbury, then called Ynswitrin,^y and founded a Church and Monastery there. Doubtless a Church was founded there in these early times, but by whom it is not easy to determine. Glastonbury was then surrounded by water, and that large conical mound which you can see for miles round, was an island.

As I may have, in the course of these Lectures, to speak of facts which you may hear objected to, as traditionary, I will explain what is meant by historical tradition. Historical traditions relate to matters of fact which were not set down by those who lived at the time when they took place, but were handed down for some time, longer or shorter, from one generation to another. But under this common name there must be comprised events to which we must attach very different degrees of credit. One who shall believe every thing so handed down, without any regard to the nature of the things themselves, or their relators, whether the relators were themselves worthy of credit, or the accounts contradictory either in themselves or to other well attested facts, such an one would be credulous,

^y Called also Avallonia.

that is, he would be ready to believe over-easily, without being at the pains to think whether what he believed was a true fact or no. On the other hand, one who should be disinclined to believe any thing, simply because it was marvellous, or contrary to what *he* would have expected, without considering the evidence for it, would be unreasonable and prejudiced. These two traditions, that St. Paul, and St. Joseph, of Arimathæa, preached the Gospel among us, will explain what I mean as to different degrees of evidence. The account of the preaching of St. Paul is, in itself, not unlikely, because we know that he himself wished to preach in the west; it was his wont to preach where others had not preached the Gospel before, that he “might not build on another’s foundation;” there is ample time for him so to have preached, even eight years, in which no other account is given of what he did; then we have varied and credible authorities, who were no way biassed by their wishes; they confirm one another. The fact that St. Paul did preach “in the furthest west” is not tradition, but contemporary history, being asserted by a Bishop well known to him at Rome. Nor is there any thing alleged against it, except that, for some reason which we know not of, it pleased God that the history of the Acts should not be continued beyond St. Paul’s first imprisonment, and that he should write no letters in these parts. But this would be to make our ignorance a measure of the Divine Wisdom. It has not pleased God to give us, in Holy Scripture, the history of St. Paul’s later ministry. But it would be plainly very wrong if, because we have not any knowledge in the way we would, we were to cast away any which

we might have. On the other hand, the coming of St. Joseph of Arimathæa is not mentioned by any writer until eight hundred years afterwards, and that account is, in some important details, contradicted by what we know of those times. Again, there is a current belief now in Spain that it was converted by St. James, the elder. But this was unknown in Spain itself for nearly nine hundred years, and was publicly rejected in a great Council, in the thirteenth century. It seems even probable that that St. James never left Judæa, having suffered martyrdom there nine years only after the death of our Lord. Yet indolent persons content themselves with saying, "it is a *tradition* that St. Paul and St. Joseph, of Arimathæa, preached in England, and St. James in Spain," and then think that because all are alike traditions, all are alike to be believed or disbelieved, and generally save themselves trouble by disbelieving them all. But you, if you are wise, will not act thus. If these statements are found in different authors, who are themselves worthy of credit, and who did not certainly copy from each other, they may generally be received as facts, especially if they carry an air of truth with them, and are not inconsistent with the manners and feelings of the times of which they speak. And even when statements have been altered and added to, while handed down from one to another, until generations after the events they tell us of had passed away, they often have a portion of truth. Some people reject all tradition, for there is a spirit abroad in the present day which prefers questioning every thing to believing any thing; but it is not a right spirit, for it takes its rise in pride, nor is it a teachable spirit, for

great part of what we know in this imperfect life must be uncertain to *us* if not received traditionally, that is, as our forefathers received it before us. My advice to you is, to receive all traditionary statements cautiously, neither believing nor absolutely disbelieving them, but bearing them on your mind for future study, when you may be better able to judge what credit you may attach to them.

In this way you will find it a most beautiful thought, and one full of interest, that the consenting tradition of our native land witnesses to the fact that the religion of Christ was preached and believed upon these shores before the Apostles had passed away from the earth ; and that among the many holy saints said to have been instrumental in this blessed work of mercy, some one, it need hardly be doubted, did really land here and impress upon our soil those holy foot-prints, the memory of which has been as imperishable as the truth they proclaimed.

And now it may be well to pause awhile, and to bring before your hearts and minds the labours of those wonderful men, the saints of old, in planting the Church upon our shores.—For, living as we do, in soft and luxurious times, we can hardly understand what it is to leave all for Christ, nor do we consider the perils by sea and land they did not fear to endure, the hunger and thirst they were ready to bear, because they remembered, that while they were full, millions of their fellow creatures were without the Bread of Life, and lacking that, might die unblest.

Those were not days when England contained good inns, warm fires, soft beds, and quick conveyances for

the weary traveller, when a journey was easy and pleasant: sunk in heathen darkness, and the abode of savages, she had no shelter for the stranger, no house for the houseless. But this did not keep the saints of old from her shores. Their own country, their kindred, their family ties, health, rank, and riches, the rewards of learning and eloquence, the attractions of station and power, all these they left: all that we love to dwell on in thought, and wish to live for, all those treasures it is our pride to possess, all those pursuits that fill the day with never-ending variety, all that is beautiful in poetry, painting, and science,—these too they relinquished. And for what was that exchange made? For an uncertain and dangerous voyage to a country that they had never seen; where human beings were often sacrificed, which was cold, inhospitable, barbarous; where they might become the prey of wild beasts, or of still wilder men, and leave their bones to whiten unburied upon the pathless moors; where none met together to pray in the calm morning hour or the stillness of even-tide; where there were no churches to pray in; where no sweet-ton'd bell told the wayfarer of a home in the wilds which he might reach and be at rest; for Britain could promise no home but the grave: to a land without hope, and where the word hope would be a mockery but for the unquenched hope of immortality that burned so brightly within them. Truly we may say of such “they loved not their lives even unto death,” and is it not a sad and sober thought that they endured all their sufferings that they might leave us, in the true faith, a legacy, the blessedness of which we scarcely value, to maintain which, “whole and undefiled,” some

would not part with a single comfort that they possess? Is there not a startling difference between their ideas of self-sacrifice, and the importance of the true faith, and those of modern times? For theirs was a sacrifice of every thing that life holds dear, and for the whole term of their life, and that life itself, if in laying it down they could lead others to Eternal Life. Surely it becomes each one of us to measure his faith by theirs, and then to retire within himself and mourn.

LECTURE II

THE time at length came when the Romans set themselves seriously to improve their conquests in Britain. For this purpose Nero placed the command of the army under Suetonius Paulinus, whose first onset was against the Druid superstition which he determined to put an end to by force of arms. During the successive encroachments of the Romans, those among the Britons who still retained a burning love for their ancient liberty had retreated, step by step, towards the farther parts of the island, and their last strong place was Mona, or Anglesey, an island, as you know, on the Welch coast. There they awaited the approach of the Romans; and, being reduced to extremity, they used every means now in their power to oppose their foes, even to setting the terrors of their religion in array against them. Their women assembled in groups upon the sea shore, with wild streaming hair, and still wilder gestures, ran backwards and forwards screaming and yelling, and presented a frightful spectacle, especially when, at night, the glare of the watch-fires and the torches which they carried in their hands lighted up the scene. All was in vain. The sacred groves were cut down, the Druid priests massacred, the altars destroyed, and the people put to the sword. So fell the main strength of that mighty superstition; to make way, not

as the Romans hoped and intended for their splendid pagan sacrifices, and gorgeous festivals, but for the mild and peaceful precepts of Christianity, enforced neither by fire nor sword, but by the exertions of a few poor wandering strangers and the resistless eloquence of the Spirit of truth.

Meanwhile the Britons employed themselves in gathering their strength for one mighty struggle. With slavery before them, their hearths desolated, and the altars of their faith destroyed, they had but one common wish, to regain their country, or to perish in the attempt. Their Roman conquerors had added insult and disgrace to injury, having treated the daughters of Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, with great barbarity; and that unhappy queen, outraged in her dearest feelings, willingly accepted the command of the whole British army which she led into battle herself. They who are desperate can afford to be fearless; and Boadicea, heart-stricken and hopeless, shewed a courage which filled her enemies with alarm and dismay. For a time the Roman army seemed paralysed, disasters were frequent and serious, and London, a place of importance even then, was taken, and the inhabitants, seventy thousand in number, and most of these Romans, were put to the sword. But the success of the unhappy queen did not last; Suetonius Paulinus, by one great and decisive victory recovered his losses, and it is said that not less than eighty thousand Britons perished in that fearful battle, while Boadicea, not choosing to fall into the hands of her conquerors, swallowed poison to terminate her wretched existence. So ends the record of her glory and her misery!

During the years following upon these events Julius Agricola, a Roman general of much fame, penetrated all through the country, conquering as he went. He afterwards made great efforts to civilize the natives, by introducing among them Roman arts, customs, and luxuries. He is the first of her invaders who made Britain a part of the great Roman empire, reducing her to the dependent state of a province: still governed by native princes, but with only a nominal power, and under a Roman noble who resided in Britain, and enforced the laws of the empire upon the inhabitants.

Julius Agricola did good service to the Britons in one respect; he built a wall in the north of the island to keep back the troublesome Picts and Scots, who were continually committing depredations upon their southern neighbours by crossing the boundaries that separated the two kingdoms; when, surprising whole villages, they carried off all that they could lay hands on into Scotland. This wall was very wide, and there were small towers upon it at short distances from each other; each of these towers having for its defence a garrison of soldiers. Thus the Romans were becoming gradually naturalized in the country, and we find even in the present day, traces of their wealth and power, in the remains of excellent roads, beautiful villas, the floors of which were tessellated, or inlaid, in patterns, altars with inscriptions to their different gods, and urns and vessels of clay, many of them containing coins in good preservation. And the rapidity with which the natives now adopted their manners was remarkable. Even Boadicea had a coinage, a thing unknown a few years

before, towns began to spring up every where, and luxury, dress, and wealth, soon destroyed in our forefathers every remaining vestige of their former independence.

But where, you will ask, was the Christian faith? had it become extinct? Most certainly not; for we read of a persecution of the Christians by "infidels," in the year A.D. 121, where many suffered death rather than apostatize; but besides this incidental mention of the subject we know scarcely any thing, until its existence is brought before us in a wonderful manner about the year 167. For, like the spark, which, hidden and unnoticed, is nevertheless full of life, and gradually gaining unseen strength, until it suddenly bursts forth into flame; so is the history of the faith in Britain.

It was at this time that a king, whose heart God had touched, but through what means is not known, sent to Eleutherius, the twelfth Bishop of Rome, praying humbly to be made a Christian by his instruction. His messengers were called, Elvanus and Medwinus. The Bishop gave God thanks, that such an heathen nation were so earnest in asking for Christianity. By the advice of the Priests of the city of Rome they first baptized the Ambassadors; and afterwards, when they were fully instructed in the principles of the Christian faith, Pope Eleutherius consecrated the first of them as a bishop, and the second a teacher, and they were sent back into Britain, with authority to spread the blessings they had themselves been partakers of far and near. But there were other holy men at Rome of British descent; and who so fit to convert their benighted

countrymen? So thought the good Pope Eleutherius, for he also selected two more bishops from among them. These were Faganus and Deruvianus, and to this day their names are not forgotten in Wales, where much of King Lucius's territory is supposed by some to have been situated.

Shortly after their arrival at his court, he was baptized, and with him the chief of his nobles, and large numbers of his people. Lucius appears to have been king of Siluria: his name^a signifying in the language of the ancient Britons the "great luminary;" and to this his Roman name Lucius also agrees, being probably derived from the latin word lux (light).

There are still four churches in Wales which record the memory of these early saints; Lleurwg, Dyvan, Fagan, and Medwy. Llandaff church was also built at this time, it is said by Deruvianus, or Dyvan, under King Lucius's orders, and a church on the coast near Dunster, in Somersetshire, once bore the name of St. Deruvian.^b

Such was the rapid spread of truth among the simple minds of our ancestors, when people did not quarrel about doctrines, but set themselves humbly to learn them, and diligently to follow them; and can it be wondered that they were successful who gave their whole time and wealth to so glorious an undertaking?

As to the boundaries of the kingdom of Lucius, and the extent of his power, they have probably been greatly

^a Llenver Mawr. See Rees's Welch Saints.

^b Mentioned by Stow; probably the present St. Decuman's, a Church so called, but dedicated to St. Peter. One of the local traditions is that its founder, St. Decuman (?) crossed over from Wales, and was barbarously murdered by the natives.

exaggerated by the early historians, and too much depreciated by moderns. He was, in all likelihood, superior to many of the other princes, for most of them were little more than rude leaders, or chieftains, of hordes of barbarous retainers, but yet he must have held the rank of a tributary prince only, under the now far extended Roman rule. Two coins were in existence not long since, which are supposed to have been struck in his reign. They are of great antiquity, having the letters L. V. C. distinctly traced upon them, and upon the reverse side a cross, proving them to have belonged to a Christian prince. King Lucius died A.D. 201.

During his reign the Roman power was in a state of decay every where, and although the subdued and submissive Britons were now willing to supplicate their conquerors for help against their harassing enemies the Picts and Scots, such aid was not always to be obtained. These tiresome marauders had broken down the wall of Julius Agricola, and as the Britons only attempted to repair it with turf, it was not of much use as a defence. Besides which, the best of the British youth were continually drawn away into Gaul, or elsewhere, to assist the Romans, so that their own country was left without protection. Yet immense numbers of wealthy Romans resided in the land, which gave it more the character of a Roman province, than of a distinct although conquered kingdom.

And there was also a resident Roman governor, under whom the native princes held sway. Some of these were distinguished generals, others were nobles of high rank; they were subject only to the Emperor.

Thus Britain was governed successively by—

1. Salustius Lucullus,

2. Julius Severus, { who carried another wall across
the northern boundary of the
Island, which he named
“Adrian’s wall,” after that
Emperor.

3. Lollius Urbicus,

4. Calphurnius Agricola,

5. Ulpus Marcellus,


6. Helvius Pertinax,

7. Clodius Albinus,

8. Lucius Severus, afterwards Emperor.

Of the rule of Calphurnius Agricola we read, that it was disturbed by an insurrection of the natives, which caused the recall of that general by the Emperor Commodus, and Ulpus Marcellus was sent to restore order; which he succeeded in doing, but was not allowed to retain the post of governor in the island.

It may be well to give, likewise, the names of the Roman Emperors of this unsettled period, which comprises nearly one hundred years: years of such confusion, and of so little interest, and of which all that we know is so doubtful, that it is hardly worth while to occupy our time with them. The Romans were now suffering more and more from the oppression of their vast power, they were torn to pieces within themselves by discontent, jealousies, intrigues, and conspiracies, and constantly in danger without from the inroads of those tribes of barbarians who had been so long kept in unwilling subjection by them.



The throne of the Cæsars during this disastrous period was successively filled by—

Domitian,
Nerva,
Trajan,
Adrian,
Antoninus Pius,
Marcus Aurelius,
Lucius Verus,
Commodus,
Pertinax and Didius Julianus,
Severus.

This is that Severus who marched all through Britain, from south to north, and even into Scotland: he reduced the whole country to submission, and returned to Rome, leaving the command of the army to his son Caracalla, from which time until the Diocletian persecution the history of the Island is involved in obscurity. Doubtless this persecution of the Christians spread to Britain, but much later than the date of its commencement at Rome; for it is well known that our country was honoured by being permitted to furnish many witnesses to the faith, who sealed their witness with their blood. It is rather singular that the first of these noble martyrs was a Roman; and what has come down to us of the history of his conversion is so beautiful that I must stop on my way to tell it you.

The scene of the martyrdom of St. Alban was the town of Verulam, a Roman station, not far from the old abbey that now bears the name of the saint. Verulam contained many thousands of wealthy inhabitants, as well as Pagan temples, dedicated to Roman gods;

great Pagan festivals, too, were held there. The orders enforced against the Christians compelled them to part with their holy books, all their places of worship were to be destroyed, and those suspected of this belief were to be made to burn incense before a Pagan altar, and, in case of refusal, put to death. In those dreadful times many of the unstable and wavering may have been tempted to deny their religion, and so have fallen into the fearful crime of apostasy; but it is a blessed fact, that so great was the crowd of martyrs, that not only men, but weak women and timid children, were strengthened to remain firm, led to death, and slaughtered without mercy. Then were Christians hunted about like wild beasts, and their retreats often discovered by the sound of hymns of praise rising from the depths of the forest, for they still continued the services of the Church; and if unable to assemble in the day-time, they met in the darkness of the night to commemorate their Saviour's dying love. They felt that it was better to die than to give up all that made life sweet; and what was death to such, but a short road to glory? It was in the year A.D. 303, that the Britons suffered most; Constantius was their governor at that time. He was a mild man, and it grieved him to carry into effect the orders of Diocletian, yet he submitted to do so. Had he refused, he might not afterwards have been emperor, but he would have left to posterity a far prouder title than Augustus. You know, the emperors only were called Augustus; the Romans of the family of the emperors, and those chosen to succeed in the government of the empire, were called Cæsar.

Among the many Romans of rank living in Verulam, Alban is mentioned as high in birth and station. It happened that during these troublous times, a certain priest, whether accidentally, or by design, it is not said, sought a refuge in his house, where he was for many weeks secreted by the generous Roman. This singular guest excited the wonder of his entertainer ; the beauty of holiness was now for the first time brought under his notice, and a secret voice within him told him that it was a reality. He had sheltered the destitute stranger out of kindness ; this, in a heathen, was acting up to the light he possessed, to the dictates of a noble humanity, and he was richly rewarded by the possession of the “ pearl of great price.” But when, indeed, do we make any sacrifice, run any risk for the love of virtue, without reaping benefit even in this perishing world ? The holy Amphibalus, for so was the stranger called, passed many sweet and precious moments in teaching the doctrine of salvation to his noble host ; these were soon to be interrupted, and the retreat of the Christian discovered, but not until he had admitted Alban by the sacrament of Baptism to be a member of that spiritual Kingdom upon the joys of which he was so soon to enter. When the enraged populace surrounded the house and demanded their victim, Alban sought only to aid his escape, and this he effected by putting on the garments of Amphibalus, and passing for him. In this disguise he was taken before the Roman governor, when, being discovered, and taunted with his kindness to the despised Christian, he made a noble confession of faith, refused to sacrifice to the gods, was put to the torture, which he endured not only patiently but with

an appearance of satisfaction in suffering, which threw his tormentors into a fury, and finally, he was led to martyrdom, and received his crown in the most glorious manner; accompanied to the place of execution by crowds of spectators, many of whom followed him out of respect; and even, in dying, converting the executioner who was appointed to behead him, but who fell down at his feet, and entreated to be allowed to suffer with him. Nor were these the only fruits of his martyrdom. Not less than a thousand persons, convinced, by all that they had seen and heard, that Alban had suffered for the truth, travelled into Wales to seek his instructor, the aged Amphibalus; for it was thither that he had fled. There they also were bathed in the holy waters of Baptism, and afterwards in their blood, for they were followed by their enraged townsmen, and barbarously murdered. This mob of Verulamians had not yet slaked their vengeance; they proceeded to seize Amphibalus, and him they carried back with them to Verulam, putting him to death at a place called Redburn, a short distance from that city. We read of others who fell with Amphibalus, so abundant and glorious were the fruits of the Cross in those early and simple times.

The Diocletian persecution ceased soon after the death of St. Alban. Constantius then became Emperor. He is the father of the celebrated Constantine, whose mother Helena travelled to Jerusalem, to discover the Cross on which our Saviour suffered, which also it was vouchsafed to her to find.^b Constantine is supposed to

^b Socrates, i. 17. Eusebius does not mention the *Cross*, but St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, who was living at the time, writes to Constantius that it was found in his Father's reign, and mentions it, Cat. x. 19, as a well-known fact.

have been born in our country, an honour we may well be glad to claim. During his peaceful reign magnificent churches were built every where ; amongst others that of St. Sophia^c at Constantinople, the scene of the preaching of the eloquent St. Chrysostom.

Then Christianity, no longer despised and trampled upon, raised her meek brow in triumphant beauty, and the high and haughty laid down their sceptres at her feet ; then the solemn anthems and hymns of the early Church were chanted in buildings worthy of the Great King in Whose honour they were dedicated, and Christians flocked from their hiding-places in the woods and wilds, to fill these temples with worshippers : then the midnight vigil was kept in anxious prayer upon the cold church floor, and the midnight prayer was raised, and the midnight lamp trimmed, and men seemed to acknowledge in every action of their life the faith which they professed with their tongues. So rapid in England was the spread of truth, that idolatry disappeared from many parts of the country at the same time ; and soon we begin to hear of British bishops taking their seats at general Councils, making pilgrimages to Jerusalem, to visit the Holy Sepulchre, and exercising an important influence in the affairs of Christendom.

Before this Britain was divided into seventeen states, some of which I have mentioned, but Constantine made a new division of the country into three parts, of which each was an Episcopal See. These were, *Britannia Prima*, *Britannia Secunda*, and *Maxima Cæsariensis*, which last division was afterwards split into two. Their

^c The first Church : the existing building was the work of Justinian. Its title means, "of HOLY WISDOM," i. e. "of Christ, the WISDOM of God."

capital cities were London, Carleon on Usk, and York. Besides these cities we read of twenty-eight principal towns.^d Three English bishops sat at the Council of Arles in France, which was held A.D. 314: they are supposed to have represented the British Church in each of these divisions.

Now to give you an idea of a city of this date I cannot do better than quote Geoffrey of Monmouth. We read no more of towns in Britain whose houses of green turf made them scarcely to be distinguished from the woods which surrounded them, or of people who spent half their time up to the neck in swamps, or wandering about in tribes like our gypsies. A wonderful revolution had taken place, and of Carleon on Usk this old historian gives us the following description:—

“Besides its great wealth above the other cities, its situation was most pleasant. On one side it was washed by that noble river . . . on the other side, the beauty of the meadows and groves, and the magnificence of the royal palaces with lofty gilded roofs, made it rival even the grandeur of Rome.

“It was also famous for two churches; whereof one was built in honour of the martyr Julius, and adorned with a choir of virgins who had devoted themselves wholly to the service of God; but the other, which was

^d Some copies of Nennius give a list of thirty-three principal towns. Among them are —Cair Ebraur (York), Cair Ligon (Chester), Cair Ceri (Cloucester), Cair Londein (London), Cair Lion (Carleon on Usk), Cair Mencipit (Verulam), Cair Ceint (Canterbury), Cair Loit-coit (Lincoln), Cair Collon (Colchester), Cair Guent (Winchester), Cair Glouui (Gloucester), Cair Grant (Grantchester), Cair Luilid (Carlisle), Cair Peris (Porchester), Cair Caratauc (Catterick), Cair Lerion (Leicester), Cair Urnahe (Wroxeter), Cair Segeint (Silchester), Cair Guoranegon (Worcester), Cair Manguid (Manchester), Cair Britoe (Bristol), Cair Segont (Caernarvon), Cair Sorbiodunum (Sarum), Cair Tefm Teigngrace), Cair Celemion (Camalet), Cair Pensavelcoit (Pevensey), Cair Draythou (Drayton), Cair Guoreon (Woran), Cair Daun (Doncaster), or —Dauri (Dorchester), Cair Gureoc (Anglesey) Cair Merdin (Caernarthen).

founded in honour of St. Aaron his companion, and maintained a convent of Canons, was the third metropolitan church of Britain." I should tell you that the martyrs here spoken of suffered nearly at the same time with St. Alban.

Changed, indeed, must the country have become in a very few years, and soon all this luxury had its usual mischievous effect; it estranged the people from the service of their Maker. As their conversion, although rapid, had been but partial, so the way in which Christians and Pagans were mixed up together, the fashionable mania of copying in every thing the Roman style of living, and the new desires and tastes called forth by an increased civilization, all tended, after their measure, to damp that zeal which had been so beautifully exemplified in the first converts. Indeed peace and idleness, not kept in check, and regulated by obedience to an undeviating Christian rule, must make men indifferent and careless; and far better for the soul is rude persecution, where the faith is fervent and firm, than the lethargy which, like a corroding rust, insidiously eats into the very heart of every virtuous affection. Thus we find the speedy trials which again overwhelmed the land (and of which I must defer speaking until another lecture), which reduced to heaps of ruins the very towns whose glories I have just been describing, all laid by good men to the vices of their inhabitants: for, although Christianity was no longer the persecuted faith of the few, but the living light of the many, while the mass of the people continued violent, blood-thirsty, and untamed, eating and drinking, holding revels, quarrelling, revenging injuries, slighting holy ties, and

bidding defiance to the laws of their Creator, (and all this we are assured to have been the case, on the authority of every historian of the day,) no wonder that the sword of vengeance was unsheathed, and did not return to the scabbard until the whole land was desolate.

But I have been going on considerably in time since the last date that I gave you, for the beginning of the disasters on which we are now entering was not until A.D. 449. What has been left out can hardly be supplied in any regular narrative, from such scanty notices of the events of this period as are now in existence ; for, in fact, this portion of English history may be compared to the catching lights which gleam up and down the surface of a dark and indistinct picture, whose main features time has wholly obliterated : yet we may profitably look back a little, and consider the state of the country and of religion, as far as these are revealed to us in the indistinct accounts which we possess ; and this I intend doing in the next Lecture.

LECTURE III.

“ Because of unrighteous dealings, injuries, and riches got by deceit, the kingdom is translated from one people to another.” Ecclus. x. 8.

LITTLE in these days is thought of national sin : men think they will only have to answer for themselves. They forget that the Church should be one, and its members, being members of the same Body, one with another. They are not accustomed to feel for any wants but their own ; or those brought so near them by neighbourhood that they stare them in the face, and give them pain in the contemplation. They look on their property as their own ; not upon themselves as stewards of God's gifts for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. They look upon sin and misery as necessities of the times, with which they need not individually concern themselves ; or if some more thoughtful than the rest do lend their aid to deeds and schemes of benevolence, this, which is the duty of all, is accounted a great thing, talked of, and praised. Thus crime after crime becomes a matter of history, and no one “ knows” or “ considers” his own share in the sin as a member by Baptism of the same Body ; as professing a faith which teaches that if “ one member suffer, all the [other] members suffer with it ;” as owning in his Creed a truth, which, if only the serious acted upon it

in every-day life, would at once change the whole state of society. I do not mean that the serious think nothing of the sins and wants of their fellow-countrymen, but that they do not bear in mind the part they themselves should take by social prayer, social example, influence, sympathy, by the sacrifice of unnecessary luxuries, when thousands of the members of Christ's body, the Church, are untaught and unfed, to shew that they feel in living union with her, "not their own," nor alone. Yet when deeds of glory, or high heroic achievements are in question, it is different; then all can rejoice, all can claim a share in the honour they confer. It is true that this has ever been the case, but I wish to bring it to your notice as not less true that it is more particularly the sin of our own times. We do not now trace God's punishments as arising from any fault in ourselves, we do not believe what every page of history ought to tell us, that Heaven will visit a land with judgments when mercies have been slighted and despised, and privileges unimproved.

Perhaps we may best unlearn our thoughtlessness by considering how differently early historians thought and wrote, and taking the opportunity now afforded us for reflection on that part of our Island history that we have just been going over, comparing the state of the early Britons with our own, their advantages with our privileges, our present happy position, and their fate.

But to do this I must string together a number of events and details that scarcely seem to belong to each other, although they are all parts of the same history; for to know anything of a people, we must try to live

among them, and nothing is worthless or misplaced that helps to this end.


Meanwhile it will be interesting to say something of the monasteries which were now springing up in different places, for while the fact of their existence is historical, and full of importance, the purposes for which they were founded, and the manner of their foundation, though not less historical, as shewing the teaching of the Church in those days, have not been generally considered. The monasteries at Glassenbury, Winchester, and Bangor, if not founded or enlarged by King Lucius, (as more recent accounts say), were certainly of great antiquity, as also were the choirs, or religious bodies, at Llandaff, Caerleon, York, and elsewhere. Some of these were in cities, others became centres for the spread of Christianity in the country : and, although planted at first in the wilds, were soon surrounded by the dwellings of those who desired to live within reach of the blessings of Christian services and Christian teaching. Although the Romans had introduced many improvements, the appearance of the country generally was little changed. You might ride for miles and miles through dense woods, the morasses were undrained, and the inhabitants of the different districts continued ignorant ; even agriculture was but little understood, and the peaceful arts, such as spinning, weaving, &c. were as yet unpractised. It was an object with the devout men of these times to form themselves into communities, or companies, with the view of reclaiming the land from paganism. Such companies agreed to live by rule, that is, they had fixed regulations and laws, to which every member of the community was obliged to

conform, they had no property of their own, but shared all things in common, and all was to be dedicated to God's service and the benefit of their fellow men. They usually obtained leave from some king, or native chief, to reside on his land, or to settle on some swamp, of which no one would envy them the possession ; and their first employment in settling, was to build a Church. These bands of holy men were generally twelve in number, in imitation of the blessed Apostles, with one who took authority over the rest ; and the place selected for building, often a secluded valley, near a running stream ; the spot consecrated perhaps by being the burial place of a martyr, the very ground on which he had witnessed to the faith, fallen for the witness he had borne, had been rudely interred, and almost forgotten. But there would always be a few whose remembrance of the stranger was undimmed and mingled with an indistinct impression of his innocence, with a wondering wish to know what singular principle had changed his nature, so as to make him different from all others. They could not forget his meek and beautiful brow ; meek even in mortal agony, and beautiful from an inward holiness, the secret spring of which they sought for in vain. Such persons might perhaps assemble round the martyr's grave on the calm summer evenings, and talk with awe and earnestness of the peaceful tenant beneath, going over their recollections of his history, his first appearance amongst them, his manner, tone of voice, his patience, and gentleness in suffering. All these they would recall, as well as the circumstances of his death, and so, from year to year, the place where he fell was as clearly marked as if a splendid tomb had been erected

over him, while, in a few instances, a rude cross of wood or stone, hastily raised, in love and piety, by his sorrowing companions, yet remained, to fix, beyond all doubt, the exact locality of his martyrdom. There, too, the children of the neighbourhood would play through the long sunny hours, (for children love a spot to which a story and a mystery is attached), and they would wonder yet more than their parents who the stranger was, and why he had been so cruelly put to death. Thus time passed on, until a fresh event called forth fresh surprise, as connected with the martyr's grave. Such would be the arrival of twelve or thirteen quiet men, whose intention seemed to be to erect a building there ; and in the intervals of building they would occupy themselves in prayer, by the grave of the departed Saint, in preaching the same truths for which he had been put to death, and in relieving the sick and unfortunate in the neighbouring district. In these employments they often met with much opposition, but in a little while the inhabitants began to be less suspicious of them, and more anxious to assist them. Some had had a sick relative raised from the bed of death, by the intercession of one of these Christians ; a deformed and feeble child caressed by another, had returned to its parents sound in mind and straight in limb ; a fever, that had ravaged the surrounding country, had kept away from the village where the monks resided. I am not letting my imagination run wild ; such miraculous proofs of a present God were not wanting in the days of which I am speaking, to aid the efforts of those who first converted our countrymen. In process of time a Church arose in the heart of the wilds, and, on the day on


which it was consecrated, the bones of the blessed martyr were disinterred, and placed reverently beneath the altar ; and now, that hitherto silent valley re-echoed daily to the sound of prayer and praise, and long after its inhabitants had gone to rest the more wakeful saw lights glimmering in the church, in the dead of the night, and caught the tones of chanted psalmody borne down the valley by the breeze ; and such loved to think that they were not lying awake alone, but that holy men were keeping watch with them, and praying for them.

This, then, was the way in which the first religious houses were reared, for the monks constructed dwellings for themselves, near the Church ; and, by degrees, the land all round was cleared and cultivated, the marshes drained, and peace and abundance flourished, and spread gradually from these peaceful centres throughout the whole district. The monks supplied the necessities of nature entirely by their own labour. Now they might be seen felling the monarchs of the forest, now digging in the fields, or driving the cattle to their homesteads, then, at the sound of a bell, leaving their work to assemble to celebrate the services of the Church, at the different times of prayer. Nor were their labours confined alone to the supply of their own wants ; all distressed wanderers, all the oppressed, all the wretched and friendless found shelter and sustenance within the walls of the monastery, were entertained, assisted, and sent on their journey with a blessing. Another of their employments was writing out copies of the Holy Scriptures, and the records, decrees, ordinances, and canons of the Church, as well as the lives of the Saints and works of the Fathers. In those days printing had not




been invented, and but for the monks we might have had no means of knowing the Divine Will, by the study of the written Word, no chart of the hidden rocks and shoals that lie between us and Heaven. In this way, too, have come down to us the beautiful prayers of the ancient Church. Theirs, then, was not a career of ease, or indolence, or self-pleasing ; their labours were many, their hours of rest few, their relaxations the change from one employment to another, their food plain, simple, and taken but twice in the day, and their whole life one continued sacrifice. In their first settling, they went through severe hardships, being, in some instances, stoned and ill-treated by the people, who afterwards acknowledged the truth in their conversion ; it was, also, by unwearied toil that they succeeded in procuring the means of subsistence, for every thing was to be done by manual labour ; and starvation often stared them in the face, and cold and sickness overtook them before their work was accomplished. We are too apt to think of these institutions, in their full grown and wealthy state, as places of bodily and mental rest, as scenes of beauty and peace, and to forget the hours of suffering passed by their first founders ; and that when monks became luxurious and worldly, as doubtless many did in after years, it could only be by breaking the very laws on which their position depended, by returning to the world they had given up, and renouncing the vows they had so solemnly taken.

There were then already many of these monasteries in different places, although we do not know the names of all. They might almost be called missionary settlements ; and they soon became powerful engines in the



spread both of religion and education ; so that knowledge, if not general, was far from being rare. The really religious of all times have been found the best promoters of learning and science. Although valuing no human attainments, except as they may be made useful for the true end of life, growth in faith and holiness, they neglect nothing that adds interest and value to truth. The power of St. Peter's Heaven-taught zeal, and of St. John's deep and expressive devotion, may seem, for the moment, to throw worldly wisdom into the shade, yet will not St. Paul's thrilling eloquence remain unappreciated and unloved. His "letters are [indeed] weighty and powerful." So is all consecrated talent, which is invested with a new strength and influence by its Divine Giver, when His secret purposes are, through its means, to be carried out into action. Different persons must be differently trained. All need to receive truth with the simplicity of children, all must learn to account human knowledge as worthless by itself, but it is one of the mysteries of the Divine Will that they should be brought into this state of feeling by distinct and seemingly adverse methods ; some by the allurements of love, others through the eloquence of argument. Thus the early Saints did not despise learning, they only sanctified it.

Then it was that, in the midst of rude savages, of princes knowing little more than the ignorant people whom they made their slaves, that the lamp of education burned brightly in the narrow cells of those who worked without reward, and had given up all hope of human praise. And the same hands (perhaps hands that had been nurtured in a court, amidst luxury and



elegance,) might now be seen maimed and cramped by the weight of the spade and mattock, and the chilly labour through a long winter's morning, and now carefully transcribing, with neatness and skill, the beautiful manuscripts for which the whole world must ever be indebted; for what would have become of literature, when barbarians overran and destroyed the Roman empire, but for the Church? There was much need for it now: Pelagius, originally a monk, and earnest in contending against the lax habits and maxims of nominal Christians, so urged man's powers as first to lose sight of, and then to deny, the inward grace of God's Holy Spirit. He made the Gospel to consist in mere teaching. He taught his heresy first at Rome, then in Sicily; but his writings made their way into France also and Britain. The British Church was forced to send to Gaul for the means of counteracting their progress. His heresy was condemned abroad, in several councils, chiefly through the great St. Augustine; and he himself sunk into obscurity, after he had escaped condemnation at the Council of Diospolis, by evasion and virtually anathematizing or pronouncing himself accursed. But as poison generally causes disease in the whole human frame before there is time to administer the remedy, so does heresy infect the Church; nor is her sore healed without much suffering; and besides this, in the Church the poison is not always detected until it has done its corroding work but too surely. In early times every part of the Church was in union with the others, and not only were the trials of a sister Church felt as one common affliction by each branch, but each limb or section seemed to sympathise with the

more distant member. This union, or rather intercommunion, as we should now call it, was a visible reality to a sinful world. The body, although in divisions, was not rent ; there was no schism in it. When the British Church groaned under her malady, and demanded help from Gaul, it was promptly given ; and two bishops, high in esteem for learning and holiness, were sent over to quell the Pelagian heresy. These were Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus, bishop of Troyes. They did not take the way we should now think best for this end, for we hear of them as travelling about the country, making converts, instead of arguing on the subtleties of theological terms with the learned among their adversaries. They appear, by the holiness of their lives, and the miracles they were enabled to perform, to have had a wide influence ; but their opponents, not choosing to yield to such arguments for their orthodoxy, prevailed on them at last to meet them at an appointed place, and discuss the differences between them by the word of mouth. The place chosen for this meeting was near the grave of the martyr St. Alban, which was afterwards opened with much solemnity. Here it pleased God to give the advocates of truth a signal triumph. We are told that the Pelagians came in great splendour to the meeting, this fact alone speaks volumes. Heresy, which begins in insubordination, generally ends in sin ; and false doctrines make their way into the heart by ministering to its lusts. Truth is humble, and without display, waiting for all aid upon God.

About this time the Britons were in great extremity from the attacks of their old enemies the Picts ; and

from the Saxons, who came over from Germany in bands, and joined the Picts against them. Of the Saxons I shall say more bye and bye. Before Germanus and Lupus returned to Gaul, they left another proof of the power of holiness upon the memory of the distressed people. They had travelled into Wales, probably with the British army, for they were then in the camp, spending the season of Lent in training souls for Baptism, at the ensuing Paschal Feast. For this purpose a temporary church covered with green boughs had been erected. Nearly all the soldiers manifested a desire for conversion, and gave themselves up to combat against the powers of darkness, forgetting for the moment the other combat which impended. At Easter, hundreds entered the purifying wave, and came out of it endued with new life. They were in earnest, and their souls seemed then dearer to them than life and property ; but you may imagine that such a complete disorganization of their usual thoughts and habits, and the absence of strict precautions against the foe, laid them open to assault and surprise. Their apparent helplessness filled the enemy with confidence, and the Christians soon heard that they were hemmed in on all sides, and humanly speaking, given up to inevitable destruction. Indeed the truth of their peril was so keenly felt that they could only look for succour to the same Divine arm that had first been laid bare to nerve them to a higher victory. They were yet, as Bede tells us,* “dripping with the waters of Baptism” when the foe came on them ; they had, however, time to send to Germanus and Lupus, to beg their assistance and

* Bede, book i. chap. 20.

prayers ; and they were joined at once by these holy men, cheered, blessed, and drawn up in faith and hope, and in battle array, in a wild Welch valley, called to this day, "Maes Garmon," or, the field of German ; where the beetling cliffs seemed to promise some shelter from the foe. Here they were desired to remain quite passive, and to do nothing but repeat such words as were uttered by their venerable leaders. All were to repeat as with one voice.

Again the enemy was seen in advance, while the devoted band of Christians had, apparently, nothing to expect but slaughter. On a sudden the word Hallelujah ! was pronounced. Like an electric shock it passed into every voice, and incessant were the Hallelujahs on all sides. Three^b times the word was said, and three times it was poured out in thundering accents to the surrounding hills. Then the hills caught the strain of Heaven, and echo upon echo awoke from the sleep of ages, and gave back Hallelujah ; not a rock was silent, not a stone but thrilled, not a breeze but carried the sound from point to point, and each point again reverberated it to the surrounding hills. And where were the enemy ? The effect of this sudden shouting, echoed so sublimely by the mountains, had thrown them into complete disorder. They could not comprehend it, and a vague fear of an unseen danger is always more terrifying than an ascertained and undoubted peril. They fled in inextricable confusion, and in every direction ; some in their haste leap-

^b Doubtless in honour of the Holy Trinity. "Under the idea of doing 'all to the glory of God,' it was usual for persons (in the ancient British Church) to sit three together at their meals, in commemoration of the Blessed Trinity."—*Lives of the English Saints*, no. iii. p. 36.

ing headlong into the stream, whose brawling current had joined in the deafening noise of the Christian soldiery, and perishing in its turbid waters. "So let all Thy enemies perish, O Lord."^c But such triumphs as I have now recorded are ever few and far between; they serve, as the convulsions of nature, to remind and teach us Who it is that is "Ruler above all:" they would lose all effect if they were frequent. So, as time passed on, and the memory of the holy saints, to whose prayers the above mentioned victory is to be attributed, became fainter and fainter in the public mind, the people fell back from the faith, and the "mystery of iniquity" worked its pernicious way, tainting alike Pagans and Christians. One thing had been effected; Pelagianism had disappeared almost entirely, the head of the monster heresy had been crushed, and although there was, a few years afterwards, a slight return, in the minds of some, to this false belief, which occasioned Germanus again to visit our country,^d it was never raised in the same power and vigour; its wound had been a deadly one. Perhaps also, and we have every reason for hoping that this was the case, numbers of the recent converts kept their baptismal robe undefiled, and were "faithful unto death," but the land was "polluted with blood still." Before I tell you on what authority I make so strong a statement I may as well mention the end of Pelagius himself, for it affords a moral to all those who worship human talent apart from sanctifying grace. He recanted his errors and died, it may be presumed, a peni-

^c Judges v. 31.

^d The interval between St. Germanus' first and second voyage was about twenty years.—See Collier's Eccles. Hist. p. 109.

tent. Of his learning, the record of this heresy alone survives, and it will brand his memory for ever, the calm wave of time cannot sweep it into oblivion ; may it be blotted out in eternity !

I have said that the teaching of Germanus and Lupus was soon forgotten, and indeed it is hardly to be wondered at, when we consider the deplorable state of the country. Britain was divided into small principalities, whose kings remained tolerably quiet while under the Roman rule ; but that removed, the ambition in each of claiming to be head of the others, made their kingdoms scenes of endless strife and bloodshed ; besides that luxury and wealth had weakened the energies of the people, and that their finest young men had, as I have before told you, been drawn off to join the Roman standard, and never returned again. Thus the Britons were like a flock of sheep, ready for the slaughter. They continued to implore their foreign masters for deliverance from their reckless enemies, the Picts and Scots, but the last Roman legion sent to them was about the year A.D. 426, and now all help had been withdrawn. Shortly before this, the Romans solemnly repudiated their connection with Britain ; for Alaric king of the Goths being at the gates of Rome with an army, their colonial possessions were in such a moment of peril more burthensome than profitable to them.

This incessant quarrelling for power among the rival princes of Britain continued for many years, during which time several chieftains, probably of Roman descent, assumed the title of Emperor ; one named Constantine, of whom we know little, and the

celebrated Ambrosius Aurelianus, Uther Pendragon, and King Arthur. But the history of these famous persons is so mixed up with fables, that we can hardly be said to know any thing certain about them. During this interval crime followed on crime, disaster on disaster, and revelling and drunkenness were mixed up with all. Afterwards an awful famine swallowed up thousands of the wretched people who had escaped the sword, and the ravages of the Picts appear to have been incessant, and to have assumed the character of an overwhelming scourge, which none seemed able to resist. Yet the old historian Gildas speaks of a few trifling victories on the side of the Britons, and then adds, "the boldness of the enemy was for a while checked, but not the wickedness of our countrymen; the enemy left our people; the people did not leave their sins." For, after the famine, came a time of exceeding plenty, and vice again "took root," and licentiousness "filled the land." Then arose the rumour that the Picts and Scots were approaching in a larger body than ever, determined to seize possession of the whole country, and, in the same moment, the vengeance of Heaven, justly incensed by fresh provocations, visited it with so fearful a pestilence, that the "living scarce sufficed to bury the dead." Vortigern was at this time one of the most powerful kings of the Britons. He reigned over Kent and the southern parts of England. He was a prince whose valour is unquestioned, but it was intermixed, in his character, with vice, ambition, and gross sensuality. To his fatal policy must be attributed the closing catastrophe of the period; the annihilation of all British rule in the country, and its posses-

sion by the Saxons. Finding himself utterly unable to subdue the common enemy, or, amidst so many unruly and quarrelsome leaders, to form a settled plan of attack or resistance, he proposed in Council to meet the difficulty by calling in the assistance of the very Saxons who had, hitherto, joined the Picts and Scots in the work of destruction. The history of these Saxons is obscure, but since they are so closely allied to us, I must say what was their probable origin, as nearly as I can trace it. They are thought to have been "Cimbri," or inhabitants of ancient Jutland, who made a descent on southern Europe shortly before this period; and, dividing into three bands, possessed themselves of parts of Italy, Gaul, and Germany. The Suevi settled in Italy, and sorely harassed the Romans during the decay of the Empire; the Franks overran and seized Gaul; and the Saxons, East and West Friesland, Saxony, Westphalia, Holland, and Zealand. It was the last mentioned people to whom Vortigern sent, and he promised them, in recompense of their services, supplies for their troops, and the Isle of Thanet to reside in, and have for their own.

Of the general habits of the Saxons we are told that they were famed every where for their valour and energy, loving the field of battle as much from the desire of shewing these qualities as for the sake of conquest. They were, therefore, glad to have Vortigern's invitation, and, after some deliberation, it was agreed that Hengist and Horsa, two brothers, who were high in rank amongst them, should embark, with nine thousand men, and with all convenient speed, set sail for the British shore. Most historians agree that these Saxons

came in "three long ships," but some think that the whole of the troops were not conveyed at once, but prudently reserved, lest there should be any treachery intended on the part of Vortigern. Be this as it may, it was in the year A.D. 449, the date at which I closed my last lecture, that these Pagans first arrived, and you will, I think, agree with me, that if the years we have been going over are marked by every species of horror, if the fate of the unhappy Britons is so deplorable that it must fill us with sadness, these disasters were precipitated by national sin, that fate was its just punishment. For had not mercies and judgments alternated in rapid succession, so that the voice of every man's conscience must have responded to their meaning?

There were those alive who had seen miracles worked in answer to the prayers of men ; in the minds of many the echoes of the Hallelujah battle had not yet died away ; churches were scattered through the length and breadth of the land, and, if not numerous, they were sufficiently frequent to mark, as does the wayside cross, the path to happiness and Heaven. There was, likewise, a church system in operation, schools for sacred and profane learning had been established, the Gallican Liturgy was in use, having been introduced into the British Church by St. Germanus, the Creeds were ordered to be publicly taught, and committed to memory by all converts, and many of the decrees of the Church Catholic, as, for instance, those of the Council of Arles, were enforced wherever discipline could be maintained. In addition to this, Ireland, the sister country, recently converted to the Faith, had seemed to awake, as one man, from the slumber of spiritual death, at the apos-

tolie voice of a British Saint.* It cannot be that this event, which filled all Europe with wonder, was unknown upon his native soil, or that such teaching as that of Dubricius and Illutus, bright stars, even then, in the British Church, and who had received consecration at the hands of Germanus himself, could be hidden in the retirement of a single neighbourhood. No, Britain, as a nation, had sinned against the light within her, and, as a nation, she received into her own bosom the wages of sin,—temporal and spiritual death! May we be preserved from the like awful fate!

* “St. Patrick was born in Britain: his father, Calphurnius, was a deacon; his grandfather, Politus, a priest; and his mother’s brother was St. Martin, bishop of Tours, in France. In his younger travels he was taken captive, and carried into Ireland, where he was kept so for some years. After he had his liberty he came to live with his uncle St. Martin; and after his death, and a second travel, he lived with St. German, bishop of Auxerre, . . . of whom the first made him deacon, the second made him priest. St. German having heard of the death of Palladius, persuaded him to take the duty upon himself, as he formerly designed, to go and preach the faith in that country [Ireland]. In order to this, being first ordained bishop in France, he went afterwards to Pope Celestine, . . . and that Pope did for him as he had done for Palladius; i. e. he made him archbishop, and gave him all accommodations for the work.”—Bishop Lloyd’s Ch. Govern. in Great Brit. and Ireland, p. 88. quoted in Hist. Collec. p. 175.

LECTURE IV.

I HAVE spoken of a prince named Constantine as reigning over the Britons about this time, or, as is perhaps more likely, taking the precedence of the other princes. This kind of headship continued afterwards through the Saxon period, on which we shall shortly enter, and from it arose the title of Bretwalda; which was not hereditary, although sometimes willingly transferred to the sons of those who had enjoyed it, where either talent or bravery gave them a hold on the public esteem. Therefore, when this Constantine died, of whom scarcely any thing is known, but that he assumed the imperial purple, or, in other words, the headship or sovereignty of the whole country, his son Constans, then a monk, was urged by Vortigern to quit the habit of his order and succeed his father. It is said that Vortigern, whose dominions were in the south of England, could not find a single bishop willing to release Constans from the monastic vow, and had to crown him himself. It is also said that Constantine left two other sons, Ambrosius Aurelianus, and Uther Pendragon, who were children, and were conveyed into Armorica to be safe from Vortigern's treachery, to which Constans speedily fell a victim. Whether this account of the parentage of these two famous princes be correct or not, and it is a matter of doubt, it is certain that Ambrosius and Uther *did* reside in Brittany for some years after Hen-

gist and Horsa had landed on our coast. Brittany, or, as it was then called, Armorica, seems at this time to have been the refuge of all those Britons who were oppressed or ill treated at home. It was colonized almost entirely by them, but in what year does not appear very clear. It is probable that this connection with the opposite shore may be traced beyond the period of the arrival of the Romans, when Britain and Gaul held communion in religious rites and friendly offices ;^a and some think that the families withdrawn from Britain during the Roman wars did, many of them, settle there, and there remain for good. To this day the ancient language of Britain is partially remembered and spoken in those parts.

But we must go back to the point where I left off; the entrance of the Saxons into the country. Although many saw at a glance that they were more likely to prove enemies than friends, none seemed able to make head against their introduction. Still, they kept their ambitious views a secret, for the most part, only communicating on this subject, from time to time, with their own people, but encroaching constantly, step by step, upon the liberties of the Britons. During an outward peace of seven years they continued, on one pretext or another, to come over in fresh numbers; first, in sixteen ships, then in forty; and Cantium, or Kent, part of the country lying north of the Humber, and part of

^a "For before Cæsar's invasion of Britain, the Belgæ, or inhabitants of this portion of it, (Hampshire) lived in habits of commercial intercourse with their opposite continental neighbours . . . and therefore when the Veneti, or inhabitants of Brittany . . . suddenly threw off the hateful yoke of slavery, and revolted against the youthful Crassus . . . the insurgents at once supplicated for the assistance of their opposite neighbours who dwelt on these coasts." From Mr. C. H. Hartshorne's paper on Porchester Castle, published in the proceedings of the Archæological Institute.

Lincolnshire, were soon ceded to them ; Kent being demanded as a dowry for Rowena, Hengist's daughter, whom Vortigern married, after first putting away his own lawful wife for that purpose. Vortigern by this sinful connection became more and more involved with the Saxons, and less and less his own master : so do vice and lust pave the way for ruin. There is something very pitiable in the state of the Britons at this period. They seem to have raised their voices loudly, but hopelessly, against the oppression and sin in which they were living ; for Vortigern having set the example of fearfully violating the Divine law in his own marriage, it was quickly followed by others, and now Pagans and Christians were so intermingled in the most sacred ties of life, that it was difficult to know to what creed any one belonged. Nor was there less licentiousness in other respects. After a time Vortigern's son Vortimer was unanimously fixed upon as better fitted to rule than himself, and the popular tumult intimidated the entangled and feeble Vortigern into associating him with himself in the government, an arrangement which left him with the name only of sovereignty. Meanwhile his wickedness increased to that degree, that a Council of the clergy and laity met to reprove him. St. Germanus is reported to have rebuked him upon this occasion, but against this must be set the statement generally received, that the death of that holy man took place some years before, about A.D. 448. Yet we are also told that he persuaded Vortimer to rebuild some of the churches desolated by the Saxons, and other facts, which seem to prove his having been in Britain about this time ; and I am in-

clined to think myself either that his death may, among such confused accounts as those of this period, be placed at too early a date, or that Vortigern's sin, and Vortimer's sovereignty were established facts before the time at which they are said to have been most notorious.^b The first conclusion is probably the correct one; for the venerable Bede, in his *Chronicle of the Six Ages of the World*, places some of the events we have recorded, as well as the death of Germanus, between the years A.D. 459 and 476, just before Valentinian the emperor had slain Ætius, and after what he, Bede, terms the second arrival of the Saxons.^c

Vortimer's popularity lasted as long as he continued

^b "But as to the time of St. German's death, there are very convincing arguments to prove Camden [who had placed it in the year 435] mistaken. Honoratus, in the life of St. Hilary, bishop of Arles, mentions St. Germanus as present when Chelidonius was deposed by Hilary in his visitation, which Sirmondus placeth, not without reason, A.D. 444, as appears by the epistle of Leo, and the rescript of Valentinian upon Chelidonius's appeal, which bears date A.D. 445. But which is yet more considerable, Bede saith, that, after his second return, he went on an embassy to Ravenna, and was there kindly received by Valentinian and Placidia, and there died; and not long after Valentinian was killed [see page 317, in the sixth of Martianus:] and therefore St. German's death could not be so soon as Mr. Camden supposeth. Add to this that Constantius in his Life of St. German saith, that he sate thirty years after St. Amatus in his See, who died A.D. 418, but the Sam-masthani say A.D. 420."

Bangor Garmon was the school said to be founded by St. German A.D. 460.—See Preface to Henricus, Dr. Giles trans. p. 24.

^c In addition to the note in the preceding page, I subjoin one from the "Cymry" favouring the latter conclusion. "In consequence of the revival of Pelagianism, Garmon, at the request of the Britons, paid a second visit to this country, accompanied by Severus, bishop of Triers, who was the disciple of Bleiddian" [Lupus]. Then follows the recital of Vortigern's [Gyrtheyrn's] sin, and St. German's rebuke, and the date assigned to the event is A.D. 447.

Collier, however, has the following:—

"For though the learned Camden places St. German's death to the year 435, yet he has none but Baronius for his voucher. And that the Cardinal was mistaken, appears plainly by the testimony of Honoratus, his contemporary, and bishop of Marseilles, who tells us, that 'Germanus was present at a Gallican Council, convened upon the account of a bishop called Chelidonius, and held in the year 444.' Sigonius makes St. German die in the year 448: and the writer of St. Genovese's life affirms St. German reached the year 451. Florilegus fixes the second voyage to the year 449, in which he agrees with Sigebert's *Chronicon*."—Collier's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 109.

"Sedulius, envoyé de l'évêque St. Germain, Exécuteur des dernières volontés de son maître décédé à Ravenna en 450." From M. F. Valentin's *Life of St. Geneviève*, published under the direction of the Archbishop of Paris."

to be victorious over the Saxons, whom he defeated in several battles. The first of these was fought at Eglesford, or Aylesford, in Kent, near the present city of Rochester. Here Horsa, Hengist's brother, was slain ; but it appears doubtful if, in the succeeding battles of Wippedsflete and Creganford, he did not suffer almost as much as his enemies, although some historians give him the palm of victory ; for it was at this time that the incensed Saxons ravaged the country in every direction, destroying Churches, Monasteries, and clergy, and putting men, women, and children to the sword, until heaps of ruins were the sole fragments of the glorious buildings that so lately stamped on the land the noble features of a growing and purifying faith. Melancholy indeed was it to see the dead unburied, the villages burned to the ground, and the poor bewildered people wandering about amongst the ashes. The cross no longer held its sheltering arms over Christian burial places ; the martyrs' sepulchres were laid waste.^d Shortly afterwards upwards of three hundred nobles were barbarously murdered near Salisbury by Hengist's orders, having been deluded to join a revel, under the promise of peace. Vortigern, who had been their companion, and instigator in trusting to the false promises of Hengist, was alone reserved as a state prisoner, on account of his relationship to that perfidious monarch ; to suffer afterwards, from the vengeance of heaven, a more cruel and less distinguished fate, for he was burned to

^d "In 1687 Mr. Lluyd, the antiquarian, copied from a stone called Bedh Porws, or Powis's grave, near Lech Idris, in Merionethshire, an inscription in Roman letters, 'Porvis hic in tumulo jacet homo * * * ianus fuit : ' and it is referred by him to a Roman of the second or third century. In Cornwall, Wales, and other parts of England, we find the same figure (the Cross) occur in ancient sepulchral monuments of Roman date." Ecclesiologist for February, 1848.

death, in a castle in Wales, in which he had taken refuge from his enemies.

Under these first trials the people fell back upon the clergy for counsel, and Guithelin, archbishop of London, proposed sending into Armorica, for Ambrosius,* who had already signalized himself there, by his valour, and was "a brave soldier on foot, and a better on horse-back;" but he had higher qualities, for he was one who feared God.

What can be more beautiful than Geoffry of Monmouth's character of this distinguished man? "Magnificent in his presents, constant in his devotions, temperate in all respects, and, above all, one who hated a lie." A life of prayer, of self-denial, of charity, of faith in the Presence of the Unseen! Well might Ambrosius be chosen by the Church to fight his country's battles; well might the Divine favour be expected to crown his efforts with success!

Accordingly they were blest, and accordingly we hear of his doing more than fight battles, of his burying the dead, building Churches, restoring the clergy to their rights, conferring the vacant sees on such men as Dubricius† and St. Sampson, keeping Easter with great solemnity, and on the occasion of a battle, kneeling down with the whole army and imploring the blessing of heaven upon the event. Here then, amidst all the confusion and distress of these days, and our own perplexed ideas about them, is one green spot upon which

* Called in the Welch Chron. "Emrys Wledig." He began his reign, A.D. 466. Ambrosden, in Oxfordshire, is thought to be named after him. "The Cymry," p. 117.

† Dubricius, or Dyvrig, and Samson, the son of Caw, lord of Cwm Cawlwyd, a district in the north, were elevated by Ambrosius to the archiepiscopal sees of Caerleon and York, A.D. 490. See "the Cymry," p. 119.

mind and memory may repose without the fear of being driven from it by conflicting statements. All historians agree in the reality of Ambrosius's Christianity ; all commend his greatness. Alas ! that he should have spent such energies on a cause already hopeless.

Associated with his uncle Ambrosius in his victories was the celebrated Arthur, now a minor, and probably the son of Uther Pendragon, with whom he has so often been confounded. When Ambrosius assumed the purple, after the manner of his ancestors, he made Arthur a patrician, this was A.D. 476 ; nor was this his first preferment, for he had been elected king of the Danmonii, at the early age of fifteen. Arthur was born at Tintagel Castle, on the coast of Cornwall, and the roar of the elements, to which his cradle was rocked, was prophetic of his after life of storms and struggles. We are now going over a good many years at once, for Ambrosius's reign was a long one, although I have so briefly summed up the main features of it. When this is taken into consideration, as well as the circumstance that Uther Pendragon is reported to have accompanied his brother Ambrosius from Brittany, landed with him at Totnes, and fought in most of his battles, this account of his son Arthur's early preferment is neither unlikely nor at issue with such dates as we can ascertain. I have hinted at the doubts which are current, whether Uther was not the same with Ambrosius or with Arthur, and whether he ever existed as a distinct individual.*

* There is also frequent notice taken in history of an illustrious individual, called Nazaleod, or Nathanleod, who fell in battle against Cerdic, at Chardford, near Salisbury. Some confound him with Uther, others with Ambrosius, while Arthur is, by others, said to have fought in the same battle with him. Of his existence, as a distinct individual, I am myself thoroughly satisfied, but whether prince or general I cannot determine ; and, as I cannot

Two circumstances seem to set these doubts at rest in my own mind,—the first, that the poet Taleissin, who lived in the sixth century, wrote an elegy on him, which is still extant; the second, that to him is attributed, by more than one historian, the origin of the Dragon Standard,^b which was once carried before the kings of England, and which was represented on that part of the royal escutcheon which has reference to the principality of Wales, and of which the following account is given:—a remarkable comet is said to have appeared when Ambrosius was dying, which was then interpreted to signify a fiery dragon, and explained by the bard Merlin as symbolic of Uther's fiery reign, and the rising glory of his son Arthur; upon which Uther caused two figures to be made in gold, each to represent a dragon, one he had carried before him into battle, and another he presented to the Cathedral Church of Winchester.

These legends lead me to take a glance at the state of religion in this period, on which some light is thrown by the above facts, and by another intimately connected with them, and having reference to Stonehenge. You may have wondered that I left out that remarkable circle, in enumerating the principal Druid Temples of the ancient Britons; my reason for doing so is that it is traditionally of a much more recent date. Indeed it is stated that it was set up in memory of Christians! Of course I am not going to assert this to be clearly proved, but, on the other hand, I do not altogether

trace his history more exactly, I have omitted mentioning him in the narrative. See Collier's *Eccl. Hist.* vol. I. p. 132. Also Stillingfleet's *Origines Brittan.* p. 332, &c.

^b Two dragons are given as the bearing of Ambrosius, in Heylyn's *Help to English History*, p. 16.

disbelieve it; and it is partially corroborated, in the opinion of those skilled in antiquities of this kind, by other circumstances.

The story,¹ which at any rate is amusing enough, runs thus:—that Ambrosius being anxious to raise a monument to the massacred nobles, near Salisbury, Merlin suggested the removal, for this purpose, of a circle of stones called the “Giant’s Dance,” and when this was laughed at, as an impossibility, because of their enormous size, he said he understood certain scientific laws for the moving of heavy weights, which would make the transit of these stones easy and safe. Accordingly it was attempted, and the attempt proved successful; and the first use made of that celebrated circle afterwards was to hold in it the feast of Pentecost, with circumstances of great solemnity. Deane is of opinion that there are undoubted traces of a lake, or the bed of a river, near Stonehenge, which would confirm the account of the stones being brought in boats, and the allusion to the sacred lake, in Uther’s elegy, which I lately mentioned, for Uther, we are told, was buried within the “Giant’s Dance.” Ambrosius was poisoned not long after this event took place, and was succeeded

¹ At the suggestion of Tramor, bishop of Caerleon, Emrys (Ambrosius) commanded that the structure called by the English Stonehenge, should be erected near the latter town, (Salisbury), as a worthy monument to the victories of “the long knives.” This was accomplished under the direction of “Merddin Emrys,” (Merlin), the king’s bard, and it has ever since been emphatically styled by the Welch “Gwaith Emrys,” or the work of Emrys. It is thus noticed in the “Triads:”—“The three mighty labours of the Isle of Britain—erecting the stone of Ketti, constructing the work of Emrys, and heaping the pile of Cydrangon.” Triad 88.—The structure was raised on the site of a former conventional circle, which was used both as a bardic seat and a court of judicature, hence its selection lately as a suitable place for the pretended settlement of national differences between the Britons and Saxons. The remains display a considerable skill in mathematics, but there is a deviation from the pure principles of constructing the bardic circles, as illustrated in those of Avebury, Stanton Drew, and many others.—“The Cymry.” See also Geoffry of Monmouth.

by Uther.^k Who Merlin was we can hardly make out, from the fables that were current about him, but he had a great influence in his day, and was a bard, and many old writers and legends make allusion to him. There seems little doubt that there was such a man.^l

But what I want you to remark is, that this history of the regard paid to Merlin's^m prophecies, and Uther's Dragon Standard, and similar details, prove to us that the ancient superstition of the Britons still retained a hold upon the minds of the people, and was, more or less, mixed up with the Christianity of this period. Of this I could bring more evidence; but I cannot, with some, imagine that the clergy really did willingly allow of such a compromise with truth, we will rather suppose that they opposed and restrained it, as far as they could. We know that sometimes the figure of a dragon or serpent was nailed up against a Christian place of worship, some say as a symbol of consecration, but it was, more probably, to shew the people that the power of the Serpent, or Evil one, was overthrown; it was the trophy of his subjection to Christ. Then, again, the many Churches dedicated, in that early period, to St. Michael, the Archangel, who is emphatically the "Captain of the Lord's hosts," and the great contender with the arch-fiend, may have special reference to the difficulty which the early saints encountered in curing the people

^k Ambrosius died A.D. 500. Uther is said to have reigned seventeen years. This does not quite agree with the date assigned for the crowning of Arthur.

^l "The three primary baptized bards of the Isle of Britain—Merddyn Emrys, Taliesin, the chief of the bards, and Merddyn, the son of Madawg Morvryn."—Triad, No. 125.

^m There were two Merlines, the one named also Ambrose, . . . the other, born in Albaine, in Scotland, and was called also Sylvestris, or of the Wood. . . . This Merline was in the time of king Arthure, and prophesied fuller and plainer than the other.—From Lloyd's Hist. of Wales; quoted from Giraldus Cambrensis.

of their ancient belief and superstitious reverence for the serpent race. Most of these structures were built upon an eminence, as Satan is the prince of the high places of the earth, and some are close to the very spots known originally as Serpent Temples. Our own St. George is said to have conquered a fierce dragon; St. Patrick to have extirpated serpents all through Ireland; others to have turned serpents into stones, &c. &c. These are but obscure and imperfect traces of the real victories of these holy men over dragon worship, in all its various forms and kinds.

Little more than I have told you is heard of Uther, in the old chronicles of our land, but much of Arthur, who succeeded him. His many victories are hardly worth going regularly through. He appears to have been, if not a giant in stature, yet a giant in chivalrous deeds and warlike exploits; but all his victories did not keep back the Saxons from gradually taking possession of the country. He was crowned by St. Dubricius, at Caerleon, A.D. 508,^a on the occasion of a solemn meeting, to regulate the affairs of the Church, and he assumed the imperial purple in A.D. 541, dying in 542.^o During the only lull in his stormy life, which happened just after his uncle Ambrosius's most important victory over the Saxons, when they remained quiet for some years, Arthur went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He is said to have instituted an order of knight-hood,^p the first of which there is any mention; and his

^a Rapin.

^o Collier p. 135, vol. I.

^p One of the Welch "Triads" celebrates "The three *knights* of a righteous discretion, in the court of Arthur"—Blas, the son of the prince of Llychlyn: Cattwg, the son of Gwynllyw-Vilwr; and Padrogl Paladrddellt, son of the king of India. Their principles were to defend all the infirm, and orphans,

court was famed for the virtue of the ladies and the politeness of the gentlemen. What amount of consistency there was in his profession of Christianity it is difficult to determine, though it is clear that a high sense of honour and duty swayed most of his actions. He named his shield "Pridwen," his lance "Ron," and his sword "Caliburn;" on the first was painted a figure of the Blessed Virgin, the last was in the possession of Richard I. and given by him to Tancred, king of Sicily. One of his great Saxon opponents was Cerdic, who thoroughly defeated him, at Chardford, in Hampshire, and was afterwards publicly crowned as king of Wessex, at Winchester, with Arthur's consent it is said, but I suppose he could not help himself. Another Saxon general, called Porta, landed, during his reign, at Portsmouth, (some say Portland), and reinforced their power, so that every where, even in the face of Arthur's repeated and brilliant victories, the cause of the ancient people of the land declined, and after Arthur was taken from them, by death, and the terror of his name had subsided, it needed but a few years of anarchy to destroy even the name of power among the unhappy Britons. In Arthur's time one hundred and eighteen bishops attended at one conference; now the distressed clergy fled in every direction, some to Brittany, others among the

and widows, and virgins, and all who should put themselves under the protection of God and His peace; and every one that was poor, feeble, and a stranger; and to deliver them from violence, wrong, and oppression; Blas by the civil law, Padrogl by the law of arms, and Cattwg by the law of the Church and the laws of God. And they would do nothing out of respect or fear, or love or hatred, or prudence or complacency, or anger or mercy, in the world; but merely what was just or righteous, according to the law of God, and the nature of good, and the requirements of justice."—Triad 117. See "The Cymry," p. 132. How many of these beautiful principles were adopted as the "code" of the other "Knights of the Round Table" does not appear, but I should imagine them common to all of the order, although probably ill maintained by some of its members.

mountains of Wales, able no longer to remain on their cures. York, London, and Caerleon were again depopulated, their Churches again became ruins. As for Arthur, while all this was going forward, he lay quietly at rest, in the Abbey of Glassenbury, with ten wounds in his body, the last of which only proved mortal. Here his remains were discovered, in Henry the Second's time, with the following simple inscription, in the form of a cross, upon the coffin :—

**“ HIC JACET SEFULTUS, INCLITUS REX ARTURIUS IN INSULA
AVALLONIA.”**

**“ HERE LIES INTERRED THE RENOWNED KING ARTHUR, IN THE
ISLE OF AVALLON.”**

Within a very short time of his death, England was divided into seven great Saxon provinces, of which the following are the names and extent :—

1. The Kingdom of Kent : which comprised Kent, the Isle of Wight, and the parts over against that island.
2. The Kingdom of Northumberland, also called of the Deiri : which comprised the country north of Humber.
3. The Kingdom of Essex : also called the Kingdom of the East Saxons : which comprised Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire.
4. The Kingdom of the East Angles : which comprised Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire.
5. The Kingdom of Mercia, also called of the Middle Angles : which comprised Lincoln, Northampton, Rutland, Huntingdon, Bedford, part of Hertfordshire, Buckingham, Gloucester, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Stafford, Salop, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire.

6. The Kingdom of Sussex : also called the Kingdom of the South Saxons : which comprised Sussex and a great part of Surrey.
7. The Kingdom of Wessex, called also the Kingdom of the West Saxons : which comprised the remaining part of Surrey, Southampton, Berks, Wilts, Somerset, Devon, and part of Cornwall.

Besides these Kingdoms, the boundaries of which cannot be very exactly determined, as they underwent many changes during the wars of the succeeding years, Collier mentions Leicestershire as occupied by a tribe of Middle Angles.

And here I bring to a close the first stage of our Island history, intending to treat of each of the Kingdoms of the Heptarchy separately and successively ; and, to do this, I must give you a list of the names of the principal kings in each province, as far as I can, and then returning over each separately, I shall select any event which I think interesting, leaving out such tales of rapine, revolt, and crime, as are without interest, either historically or morally.

LECTURE V

SAXON KINGS.

KINGDOM OF KENT.

Hengist assumed the title of king of Kent, A.D. 455,
dying 488.

Octa.

Escus.

Hermenric.

Ethelbert.

Eadbald. His daughter, Euswith, founded the Abbey
of Folkstone.

Ercombert and Ermenfrid.

Egbert. In his reign pope Vitalian consecrated
Theodore as archbishop of Canterbury.

Lothaire.

Edric.

Widrid.

Eadbert.

Ethelbert and Alric.

Egbert.

Cuthred.

Baldred.

Egbert, king of Wessex, who united the seven pro-
vinces, A.D. 827.

KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

Ælla over the Northumbrians. Ida over the Bernicians.

Four kings. United under Adelfrid ; who put to the sword the 1250 monks at Bangor.

Interregnum. Kingdom re-united under Oswald.

Oswy.

Oswin.

Egfrid. Adelfrida, his first wife, founded a monastery at Ely, and was revered after her death as St. Audrey.

Alfred.

Osred.

Kenred.

Osrice.

Cewulph ; became a monk, at Lindisfarne.

Eadbert.

Oswulf.

Mollon-Adelwald.

Ailred.

Ethelred. Lindisfarne burnt by the Danes, and Tinemouth monastery pillaged.

Celwold.

Osred, Ardulph, father of St. Alkmond, Alfwald, and Andred.

Egbert, king of Wessex, who united the seven provinces.

KINGS OF ESSEX. (*Continued 281 years.*)

Erkinwin.

Sleda.

Sebert ; he built St. Paul's Cathedral.

Sexted, and Seward, and Sigebert.

Sigebert the " Little."

Sigebert the " Good."

Swithhelm.

Sigheri and Sebbi. A great pestilence, which prevailed every where.

Offa.

Selred.

Swithered or Withered.

Sigeric.

Sigered.

Egbert, king of Wessex, who united the seven provinces.

KINGDOM OF EAST ANGLIA. (*Continued 217 years*).

Offa.

Titulus.

Redwald.

Eorpwald.

Sigebert.

Ecgric.

Anna ; famous for the holiness of his children.

Ethelbert or Ethelhere.

Ethelwald.

Aldulf.

Elfwald.

Beorne.

Ethelred.

Ethelbert ; murdered by Offa, king of Mercia, A.D.

792.

KINGDOM OF MERCIA.

Crida.

Webba ; he was a tributary king to Ethelbert, of Kent.

Ceorl.

Penda ; son of Wibba.

Peada.

Wolfhere. Vereburga, one of his daughters, honoured as a saint.

Ethelred.

Kendred or Cenred ; who took the monastic habti.

Ceolred.

Ethelbald ; Bretwalda.

Offa ; he obtained from the pope the canonization of St. Alban.

Egfrith.

Kenulph.

Kenelm.

Ceolulph.

Beornulf.

Ludican.

Wiglaff, or Wichtlaf.

Egbert, king of Wessex, who united the seven provinces.

KINGDOM OF SUSSEX.

Ella, crowned king A.D. 491.

Cissa reigned 76 years. Uncertainty as to the names of his successors, until

Adelwalch ; conquered by Ceadwalla, king of Wessex.

Berthun and Anthun, who succeeded to the crown, were only tributary princes.

KINGDOM OF WESSEX.

Cerdic ; who slew the monks of Winchester, and converted their monastery and church into a temple for Dagon, and extirpated the faith from Wessex.
—The “Cymry.”

Kenric.

Ceaulin.

Cuichelme and Cuthwin.

Cealric.

Ceobald.

Kynegils.

Kenwalch or Cenwalch.

Escwin.

Kentwin.

Ceadwalla.

Ina, A.D. 689—728.

Adelard.

Cudred.

Sigebert.

Cenulph.

Brithric.

Egbert, who united the seven provinces.

THE KINGDOM OF KENT.

TIME now stole on, not, as with us, stealthily, and with unfelt pace, but heavily and wearily, each event treading on the heels of the one that had gone before, and crushing by its weight the broken spirits of the wretched aborigines. Gradually they became blended with their foreign masters, but not by an union in which distinction of race was lost. There was a strong difference in

character between the ancient Briton and the Saxon ; there were elements in each that did not readily combine ; and years after the proud spirit of the Briton rose even under subjection against the very thought of anything like a friendly feeling for one owning the Saxon descent.* In Wales, to this day, the hatred of the Saxon survives among the remnant of the British race ; during hundreds of years they have remained distinct among their native fastnesses ; and a cold "*dim Sassenagh*," or "I am no Saxon," may yet be heard in reply to the English traveller seeking guidance at their hands. Deep then, it will be seen, was the misery of the period, which dates from Arthur's death, when the Saxon states were becoming definite in boundary, and settled in power, to the landing of St. Augustine, the missionary from Rome, in the kingdom of Kent, A.D. 596. The subjection of the Britons is best told by the fact, that the whole land returned to a pagan state, and the Church became isolated among the mountains of Wales. It may have been rather from the distresses of these times than from want of zeal in the British clergy, but we fail to discover in them the evidence of that missionary spirit which shews itself in love for the souls of men, as being

* With the Britains there was a difficulty to be surmounted, which existed not among the Picts and Scots, that intense hatred which they cherished against the Saxons, and everything connected with the Saxons. . . . With them the Saxon was no better than a pagan, bearing the name of a Christian. They refused to return his salutation, to join in prayer with him in the Church, to sit with him at the same table, to abide with him under the same roof. The remnant of his meals, and the food over which he had made the sign of the cross, they threw to their dogs or swine ; the cup out of which he had drunk they scoured with sand, as if it had contracted defilement from his lips. If he came among them as a stranger, and solicited an asylum, he was subjected to a course of penance during forty days, before he could be admitted to their fellowship. Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 61. vol. i.—This is the representation of an advocate somewhat unfavourable to the Britons. It is true, however, that the principal native efforts for the conversion of the Saxons, came from the north, and not from Wales, the resort of the *Britons*.

our brethren, and a willingness to undergo personal inconvenience, want, suffering, death, rather than leave these souls to perish in ignorance and sin. That the British Church was wanting in this love toward its Saxon neighbours, all historians agree, and since love is the very life of the Church, it cannot but be that where love languishes, even under great provocations and difficulties, weakness and decay must follow.

In this state of things it pleased God to raise up that great benefactor of Saxon England, St. Gregory, the first pope of that name, and justly called "the Great."

In him were blended the priceless qualities of high intellect, deep humility, and such exalted piety, that earthly exaltation had no charm for him, and when they would make him the chief bishop of Christendom, he fled from Rome, terrified at his unfitness for a position at which ordinary men would have grasped without a misgiving, and which many, far below him in attainments and qualifications for the sacred office, would have claimed as a just tribute to their merits. But it is the interest which he felt for our country that makes me bring his character before you at the present moment. This interest had its birth from the following remarkable circumstance. When Gregory was only a monk of St. Andrews,^b and long before the commencement of his pontificate, he was walking through the streets of Rome, and in passing near the slave market saw some beautiful children exposed for sale there, whose fair skins and golden hair made a great impression upon him. Asking from what country they came,

^b This monastery of St. Andrew was founded by St. Gregory in his own house, which he gave up to it, without assuming the government of it to himself.

“ they are Angles,” he was informed. “ Rather should they be called Angels,” he replied ; and then sighing deeply, he lamented that the prince of darkness should have possession of a land where the inhabitants were so beautiful ; that all was dark within, where what was seen outwardly was so attractive. He asked some other questions about them, and the answers to each struck him forcibly. He was told that they were Deiri, which his imagination immediately converted into “ De ira,” “ Saved from the wrath of God ;” and when he heard further that their king was called “ Alla,” he resolved that “ joyful alleluiahs should be raised in his dominions.” From that moment the strong desire of going to Britain, to rescue her unhappy inhabitants from heathenism, was uppermost in his thoughts : he could not get rid of it. The true faith was now firmly established on the continent, and victorious over the Arian, Pelagian, and other heresies ; and the love to souls shewn by St. Gregory, and those who followed in his steps, makes it evident that amidst all the general corruption of manners of which he often complains, the Church retained true life and power. He was not, however, permitted to accomplish the work in his own person. God was reserving him for other purposes ; and thwarted in his missionary ardour by the reluctance of the Roman populace to lose him from among them, which obliged pope Benedict to send for him back again after he had obtained his permission to start on his way to Britain, we soon find him filling the first see of Christendom ; for he was elected immediately upon the death of Benedict’s successor, Pelagius II. to that high and responsible *office*. *How* he had wound his way into the hearts of

the Roman people we do not know, but their love for him is a proof that monks were not always the idle, selfish men, some would persuade us ; they spent much of their time, it is true, in contemplation and prayer, but it does not appear that they were in any way behind the most active of these days in works of benevolence and mercy. When Gregory set out on his journey to Britain, so enraged were the people at Rome at the loss of their favourite, that they beset pope Benedict in the street, calling out to him, " You have displeased St. Peter." " You have ruined Rome." " Why did you let Gregory go ? " Gregory therefore was recalled, and returned to his monastery, and some years passed in which he filled several important situations in the Roman Church, but nothing is said of any fresh attempts on his part to carry out his project of visiting our country.

Had he then forgotten the beautiful Saxon children, and all he had heard of the spiritual destitution in which our Saxon forefathers were living ? No, his heart continued to yearn over the desolations he had no power to remedy ; his prayers had ascended up for England, his thoughts had been with her ; and although he had been quietly waiting the right time for action, and not forcing on events against obstacles thrown in the way by a wise Providence, he had never given up his much loved project ; and the time at length came when he was enabled to carry it into execution, not in the way he had wished, by going himself to convert the Saxons, but by appointing another to that work. His choice fell upon a man of acknowledged learning and sanctity, Augustine, the prior of his monastery of St. Andrew, and with him were associated other monks, to the num-

ber of forty ; for it was a perilous expedition, and the wild and dangerous journey might lessen the little band to a few men only, long before they reached the coast of Britain. I have before described a monastery of the olden time to you ; the monks who accompanied Augustine are claimed by the order of St. Benedict, and certainly followed either his rule or one nearly allied to it. What is meant by an order of monks is, a body of men who have devoted themselves to a religious life, under a particular rule, which varies according to the laws left by their founder, and generally bears his name. St. Benedict founded the Benedictines ; and various other orders, such as the Cistercian order, of which we hear much in the earlier annals of this country, were improvements upon the Benedictine.* St. Augustine has been supposed to have been a Benedictine himself,

* Extract from the rules of St. Benedict. Qualifications of a member of that order. He is enjoined, " 1. In the first place to love the Lord God, with the whole heart, whole soul, whole strength. 2. Then his neighbour as himself. 3. Then not to kill. 4. Then not to commit adultery. 5. Then not to steal. 6. Not to covet. 7. Not to bear false witness. 8. To honour all men. 9. And what any one would not have done to him let him not do to another. 10. To deny himself that he may follow Christ. 11. To chasten the body. 12. To renounce luxuries. 13. To love fasting. 14. To relieve the poor. 15. To clothe the naked. 16. To visit the sick. 17. To bury the dead. 18. To help in tribulation. 19. To console the afflicted. 20. To disengage himself from worldly affairs. 21. To set the love of Christ before all other things. 22. Not to give way to anger. 23. Not to bear any grudge. 24. Not to harbour deceit in the heart. 25. Not to make false peace. 26. Not to forsake charity. 27. Not to swear, lest haply he perjure himself. 28. To utter truth from his heart and mouth. 29. Not to return evil for evil. 30. Not to do injuries, and to bear them patiently. 31. To love his enemies. 32. Not to curse again those who curse him ; but rather to bless them. 33. To endure persecution for righteousness sake. 34. Not to be proud. 35. Not given to wine. 36. Not gluttonous. 37. Not given to sleep. 38. Not sluggish. 39. Not given to murmur. 40. Not a slanderer. 41. To commit his hope to God. 42. When he sees anything good in himself his own doing, and impute it to himself. 44. To fear the day of judgment. 45. To dread hell. 46. To desire eternal life with all spiritual longing. 47. over his actions at all times. 49. To know certainly that in all places the eye of God is upon him. 50. Those evil thoughts which come into his heart immediately to dash to pieces on Christ. 51. And to make them known to his spiritual senior. 52. To keep his lips from evil and wicked discourse. 53. Not to be fond of much talking. 54. Not to speak vain words, or such

but of the truth of this I am not certain. His mission took place A.D. 496, and has been called "England's second conversion," the first being that under king Lucius, of which you have heard.

About this time there was in the kingdom of Kent a Christian princess, Bertha by name, daughter to Clothaire, (some say Charibert,) king of the Franks. On her marriage with king Ethelbert, she brought over from France bishop Luidhardus, to enable her to enjoy the ordinances of the faith in the heathen court, and to be her spiritual guide and counsellor. The Church at which she attended Divine Service was St. Martin's, near Canterbury, built in the time of the Romans. There is still a Church of that name upon the same spot ; it is one of the oldest in England, and reared, doubtless, over the site of the ancient St. Martin's. Who would not kneel in it with a deeper reverence, as, looking back over the waste of bygone years, he called to mind the hundreds who had offered up their praises and their vows in the same holy precincts, the early period of their consecration, and their having been the real scene of the devotions of England's apostle, and first archbishop, St. Augustine ? I ought to have men-

as provoke laughter. 55. Not to love much or violent laughter. 56. To give willing attention to the sacred readings. 57. To pray frequently. 58. Every day to confess his past sins to God, in prayer, with tears, and groanings ; from thenceforward to reform as to those sins. 59. Not to fulfil the desires of the flesh ; to hate self-will. 60. In all things to obey the commands of the abbot, even though he himself, (which God forbid,) should do otherwise ; remembering our Lord's command, ' What they say do, but what they do do ye not.' 61. Not to desire to be called a saint before he is one, but first to be one, that he may be truly called one. 62. Every day to fulfil the commands of God in action. 63. To love chastity. 64. To hate nobody. 65. To have no jealousy ; to indulge no envy. 66. Not to love contention. 67. To avoid self-conceit. 68. To reverence seniors. 69. To love juniors. 70. To pray for enemies in the love of Christ. 71. After a disagreement, to be reconciled before the going down of the sun. 72. And never to despair of the mercy of God." From Maitland's Dark Ages, p. 169.

tioned that before he reached his journey's end he had to retrace his footsteps, his companions becoming disheartened and frightened by all they heard of the Saxons, and being unwilling to proceed. I do not believe that he shared their alarm, but overcome by their persuasions, he consented to go back to Rome for further advice, leaving his disconcerted monks to await the event in Gaul. When a day's journey from that city, he lay down exhausted with depression and fatigue ; it is said that he was reassured and comforted by a venerable hermit whom he found sitting by him when he awoke from the sleep into which he had fallen. Gregory the Great received him kindly, but urged his perseverance in his mission in the strongest terms ; writing a letter to his companions, in which he told them that " it were better not to enter upon a worthy design, than to break off that which is commendably begun.^a" He also did all he could to secure them a favourable reception in Britain, and kind treatment upon their journey, by giving them letters to queen Bertha, to the king and queen of the Franks, and to Etherius, bishop of Arles, in which he recommended them to their kindness. These recommendations proved of great service, and in due time Augustine and his monks reached Britain safely, landed on the coast of Kent,^e and traveling forwards in procession, carrying a silver cross before them, and chanting the Church Services, they proceeded in this way to Canterbury, where, before entering the city, they blessed it, walking once round it, and singing the following hymn, " O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, we beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy

^a Collier's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p 149. ^e In the Isle of Thanet. Collier.

fury be turned away from this city, and from Thy holy place ; for we have sinned. Hallelujah.” There they took up their abode for awhile, abstaining from any attempt to make converts until they could, in some measure, judge of the fitness of those around them for the reception of the truths they came to teach. I should have told you that king Ethelbert, in obedience to the entreaties of his Christian wife, although he did not encourage them, offered them no molestation. On the occasion of a visit which he paid them after their first landing, he commanded that they should come to him in the open air, suspecting them of practising the art of magic, and not choosing to trust himself under the same roof with them. Ethelbert seems to have had some grounds for his fears ; for the extraordinary power exercised by the saint might well have been attributed to witchcraft, even among a less ignorant people. It pleased the Divine Author of all things to permit miracles to be worked by him, as an evidence of the truth of what he taught. Miracles were often vouchsafed in one portion of the Church, when they were needed, and withheld at the same time in another, as He saw fit Who dispenseth all things as He wills. The conversion of such immense multitudes of people at once, both in England and elsewhere, is best accounted for by believing in the signs which are the attendant circumstances of these conversions, and facts that bear too closely upon them to be withdrawn or explained away. These miraculous gifts in St. Augustine excited no surprise, as is evident from a letter of St. Gregory’s to him, which has been preserved. In this letter that good man, far from praising him, warns him against being puffed up

by his success. "This supernatural assistance," says the holy father, "ought to be a great comfort to you, so you should be very solicitous about the exactness of your behaviour. You have indeed reason to rejoice, because the exterior pomp and dazzling lustre of miracles has brought the English to the inward reformation and spiritual advantage designed by them ; but then, on the other side, you ought to be afraid, lest, through human infirmity, you should grow vain upon your privilege, and make the splendour of the outside prove a loss to you within." King Ethelbert after a while, "delighted," says Bede, "with the pure life of those holy men, and their most pleasing promises, which they proved to be true, by shewing forth a multitude of miracles," himself embraced the christian faith, and encouraged, though he did not compel, his subjects to follow his example.

Before Augustine had been long in our country, he found the conversion of the nation proceed so rapidly that he was obliged to cross over to France, to be consecrated at Arles, as metropolitan or archbishop. This he did by command of pope Gregory, and this rank gave him the power to settle the Church in England on a lasting foundation, to appoint and ordain bishops and clergy, create sees, found religious houses, and take the general superintendence of the newly converted districts. In the course of his mission we hear much of his holiness, self-denial, and of the simplicity of life and manners practised not by himself only, but also by his companions. They were a truly apostolic body. The favour of the court had no effect in tempting them to ease, luxury, or sloth ; nor did the high esteem in which they were held there, cause them to alter their mode of

life, or set them in any way above the humble position they had assumed on first landing. When they travelled it was generally on foot, carrying the large silver cross before them, and a picture of our blessed Saviour, and although, from what I have said of their success, you may fancy that all went smoothly with them, this was not the case, for they were frequently mobbed and insulted, and their lives threatened. In one place, in the west of England, they were pelted with fish ; in another, the treatment they met with called down the vengeance of heaven upon the town, which fell a prey to a fearful disorder. Then it was that the prayers of the blessed saint, whom they had reviled, procured for the afflicted people a cessation of the dreadful scourge that was overwhelming them, and the humbled and penitent inhabitants acknowledged the God whom they had provoked, and were enrolled among His chosen.

I am come now to a painful part of St. Augustine's history, his conference with the British bishops, on the borders of Wales ; it is a subject on which good men have had many disputes, but in which a fair consideration will shew that the greatest allowance must be made on both sides. And, indeed, we may the rather withhold our judgment, since we only know generally the proposals which St. Augustine made, and that the British refused them, but not distinctly on what grounds they were supported and refused. At the first conference it seems to have been alleged that they^f did " many other

^f Much light has lately been thrown on the subject of the faith and practice of the ancient British Church, by the examination of documents long neglected or disbelieved. In all main points of doctrine and discipline, the result is, as might be expected, that we find that Church in unison with the other primitive branches of the Church Catholic ; besides the points mentioned in the text. The form of the tonsure, or manner of shaving the crown among ecclesiastics came afterwards (if not now) to be discussed,

things" (besides their mode of fixing Easter) "contrary to ecclesiastical unity;" at the last, St. Augustine limited his demands to these three:—"to keep Easter at the due time," that is, at the time then adopted out of the

(Bede iii. 25.); but on this point St. Augustine was willing to concede to the Britons the liberty of retaining their own method. Of this custom, Lingard gives the following account. "During the first three or four hundred years of the Christian era, the clergy were not distinguished from the laity by any peculiar method of clipping the hair; such a distinction in times of persecution would have betrayed them to their enemies. Afterwards the Church proscribed among them all those modes which might be attributed to effeminacy or vanity, and of course the long locks which were worn with so much parade by the northern nation. But the tonsure, properly so called, originated from the piety of the first professors of the monastic institute. To shave the head was deemed by the natives of the East a ceremony expressive of the deepest affliction; and was adopted by the monks as a distinctive token of that seclusion from worldly pleasure to which they had solemnly condemned themselves. When, in the fifth century, the most illustrious of the order were drawn from their cells, and raised to the highest dignities in the Church, they retained this mark of their former profession. * * * It was at this period that the circular and semicircular modes of shaving the head were introduced." Lingard's *Anglo Saxon Church*, p. 53, vol. 1. The circular form of shaving the crown was in imitation of the crown of thorns worn by our blessed Lord. The mode of keeping Easter, and the form of the tonsure in use among the Britons are interesting traces of our connection with the oriental Church. Soon after Christianity was first preached in Britain, "many holy men from Greece and Rome," came among us, and perhaps the Britons, naturally prejudiced against their Roman masters, adopted the Greek customs in preference to the Roman. Subsequently, the Greek rule was adopted by the monks in Britain, (Butler's *Lives*. St. Columban); the mode of swearing "by the gospel of St. John" must have fostered a love for the Churches whose apostle he eminently was. The British Church kept up communication with the oriental Church, by pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and by direct ordination from the patriarch of Jerusalem, (as in the case of Dewi, Teilo, and Padarn; Teilo was bishop of Llandaff, A.D. 512), as well as through the Gallic branch, which conformed, in some respects, to the eastern rule, uniformity not being then enforced as an essential of unity in the Church. See Williams' *Cymry*, c. 16, 24, 25. By one of the canons of the Council of Arles it is enacted, "that Easter should be everywhere observed on the same day and time, and that the bishop of Rome should give notice of it, according to custom." But Collier says "this latter part was altered, as Binius confesses, at the Council of Nice, which referred this business to the bishop of Alexandria." *Eccles. Hist.* vol. I p. 61. The decision of the Council of Nice is thus stated in Lloyd's *Hist. of Wales*, and it places the difference between the Roman and British mode in so clear a light as to make it very easy to be understood:—"The Church of Rome, by order of a general Council, holden at Nice, had appointed that ever the next Sunday after the 14th day of the moon should be Easter day, so that Easter should be ever either the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, or 21st day of the moon, and never the 14th day itself, nor never pass the 21st. And the Britons did use to keep their Easter upon the 14th day, and so to the 20th, as it fell; so that sometimes when it was Easter day with the Britons, it was but Palm Sunday with the Saxons." Lloyd's *Hist.* p. 18. On behalf of the Britons it may here again be said, that they kept to the custom of the Church of Asia, as followed by St. John the Evangelist, Philip the Apostle, Polycarp, and Melito," and said to have been "taught in the island of Britain, by Joseph of Arimathea."

British isles ; “ complete the administration of Baptism after the Roman manner ;” and, “ with him, preach the word of God to the Saxons.” Of these, conformity in keeping Easter seems to have been the primary^s condition, without which they could not unite in the conversion of the Saxons. It is not easy for us to estimate the difficulties which early associations would present to such a change. Their mode of keeping this great Festival was bound up with all their recollections of the piety of their ancestors ; saints before them had so kept it, and had handed it down to them ; it had probably so been observed since the gospel had been planted upon their shores. It is an implanted principle of our nature to be slow to change in anything which concerns religion ; and besides the custom of their forefathers, there was all the force of their own personal habits of devotion from childhood until now. So great are these influences, that St. Chrysostom^h accounts it one proof that Christmas day was the true day of our blessed Lord’s Birth, that it was so rapidly received all through the east, and he likens it to the rapid spread of the gospel when first preached, as being the force of truth and the power of God. At the very beginning, St. Polycarp,ⁱ “ being at Rome, in the time of Anicetus, had a dispute with him on this and other points. Anicetus could not persuade Polycarp, as having always kept it with John the disciple, and other apostles with whom he lived ; nor could Polycarp persuade Anicetus, who said that he ought to maintain the practice of the presbyters before

^s Bede’s words are “ he began, by brotherly admonition, to persuade them that, *having made* Catholic peace with him, they should undertake the common labour, for the Lord, of preaching to the Gentiles.” ii. 2.

^h In diem. Nat. D. N. J. C. init. ii. pp. 355. 6.

ⁱ S. Iren. *Fragm. Epist. ad Victor.* in Euseb. H. E. v. 24.

him. Yet they communicated together, and parted in peace." This remarkable history lived long in the memory of the Church, as an instance how Churches might retain their different traditions, and yet "both those who observe and those who observe not the same, maintain the peace of the whole Church." In consequence the Asiatic Churches (although their communion was rejected by a later bishop of Rome, whom St. Iræneus gravely censured), maintained their way of keeping Easter, until it was ruled by the council of Nice. This so far changed the face of things that the Church had now decided the question. On the other hand, the British bishops may very probably (as St. Columban did a little later on this same subject) have appealed to the example of St. Polycarp, and the later Œcumenical Council of Constantinople, in which "150^k bishops had decided, by a most holy sanction, that the Churches established in barbarous nations should live by their own laws, as taught by their fathers." St. Columban's own case is the more remarkable instance of this clinging to hereditary usage, in that, living as a missionary to revive the religious life in France, and endowed with the gift both of miracles and prophecy, he still adhered to the practice of his native land, which he calls "the tradition¹ of all the Churches of the whole west." Thus, then, there was tradition against tradition; and if the

^k Ep. 3 ad Bonifac. St. Columban appeals also to the Apostolic rule, that "each preserved what he had received, and, wherein he was called, therein abode." The canon alluded to is the close of the second canon of the Council of Constantinople. "The aforesaid canon concerning dioceses being kept, it is plain that the synod of each province shall order the affairs in each province, according to what was decreed at Nice. But the Churches of God in the barbarous nations, ought to be ordered according to the prevailing custom."

¹ Ep. 2. ad patres synod. Gall. There are two other epistles on this subject, to pope Gregory and pope Boniface. The former never reached St. Gregory, as St. Columban himself says.

authority of the council of Nice was urged on the one side, a later general council had ruled against interference with these Churches.

Although, moreover, such were the only terms now proposed, the British bishops seem to have feared that they might involve themselves in consequences they knew not what. It is hardly safe to argue from single words ; yet St. Augustine spoke to them not simply as one who wished to restore unity of practice, but as a superior ;^m and they knew not what might be involved by giving up the ancient independence of their Church. If we may in this trust an old Welsh chronicle,ⁿ they were also displeased with the attempt to win the Saxons by the substitution of festivals of the martyrs for their "sacrifices to devils." It relates, that "after the Saxons became Christians, the Britons would neither eat nor drink with them, nor yet salute them, because they corrupted with superstition, images, and idolatry, the true religion of Christ." And not they only, but the Bishops of the Irish Church, which "yet^p so flourished in the vigour of Christian doctrine as to exceed the faith of all the neighbouring nations," would not even eat under the same roof with those which came from Rome.^q

Alas for the mists of human feeling and prejudice,

^m "If ye will comply with me," (obtemperare) "in these three things, we will, with even mind, bear all the rest," &c. The answer, as given by Bede also, "neither will we have you for an archbishop," implies that the bishops looked upon acquiescence as involving such a claim.

ⁿ In Benet. Coll. Camb.

^o S. Greg. Ep. xi. 76 ad Mellit.

^p Jonas Vita S. Columbani Acta S.S. S. Bened. T. ii. p. 7. The same writer says of the Church of France, that "either through the number of outward enemies, or the negligence of bishops, the power of religion was then almost extinct. There remained only the Christian Faith ; for the remedies of repentance and love of mortification were scarcely found even in a few places among them." Ib. p. 9.

^q Bede ii. 4.

which hinder our understanding one another aright ! Who would not have thought that some way of union might have been found, when the refusal, upon which all intercourse was broken off, was expressed in such words as these :—“ Be^r it known and without doubt unto you, that we are all and every one of us obedient and subjects to the Church of God, and to the pope of Rome, and to every godly Christian, to love every one in his degree in perfect charity, and to help every one of them, by word and deed, to be the children of God : and other obedience than this I do not know due to him whom you name to be the pope, nor to the father of fathers : to be claimed and to be demanded, and this obedience we are ready to give and to pay to him and to every Christian continually. Besides we are under the government of the bishop of Caerleon-upon-Uske, who is to oversee, under God, over us, to cause us to keep the way spirituall.” St. Augustine, although a holy and good man, to whom, under God, we owe much, was, of course, not like St. Paul. We may read this page of history sorrowfully, that he required, as a condition of communion, what was no part of “ the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” and yet acknowledge our own debt of gratitude to him.

The facts connected with the subject are as follows :—The place where St. Augustine met the British bishops is generally supposed to be a spot in Herefordshire, known to this day as St. Augustine’s oak. Whether the conference took place under the oak, or in a roofed building, is not certain, but we may suppose that the former was the more probable.

It is not related what were the terms of union then propounded. We only hear that, after a long dispute, the English bishops "would not yield assent to the prayers, exhortations, or rebukes of Augustine and his companions, but preferred, in many other things besides the keeping of Easter, their own traditions to all the Churches who throughout all the world agreed together in Christ." At last Augustine proposed that they should join in prayer to God, who maketh men to be of one mind in the house of his Father, that he would vouchsafe, by heavenly tokens, to convey to them which tradition should be followed. "Let some sick man be brought, and let his faith and practice by whose prayers he shall be healed, be held to be pleasing to God and be adopted by all." The English bishops came unwillingly into this ; perhaps they had heard that God had vouchsafed to work miracles through St. Augustine, whereas through them he had not. A blind Saxon was brought ; the British bishops failed in restoring him to sight, but his cure was immediately effected in answer to the prayers of St. Augustine. The British bishops "confessed that that which Augustine taught was the true way of righteousness, but that they could not abandon their ancient customs without the consent of their own people." For those then present were but few, whether bishops or doctors, and but from one, the nearest, province. A second and larger council was to be assembled. At this "seven British bishops were present and many very learned men, chiefly from the famous monastery of Bangor, with Dinoh its abbot." They clung to their traditions, were unwilling to part with them, and yet seem to have had misgivings. Per-

plexed among themselves, and struck, perhaps, at the result of the miracle, they determined to ask the advice of a hermit, a holy and wise man, and to abide by his decision. You have heard of hermits; in the early days of the Church there were many. They were men who separated themselves from their fellows, to live apart in cells or caverns, on mountains, or in forests, spending their whole time in prayer and holy exercises; they differed from monks in this, that they lived alone, whereas monks lived in communities. The mind of the Church has, for the most part, been in favour of uniting together, whether for devotion or for practical duties; for, ordinarily, "man was not made to live alone." A life in common cherishes love, gives more scope for Christian duties, and for correcting infirmities. However God led some in another way; and those who thus passed a lonely life, in devotion, contemplation, and communion with God, were held in great reverence, for the entireness and sincerity of their self-sacrifice. And, indeed, it was, with reason, thought, that no one could support a life so cut off from all earthly comforts, unless supported in it by God. A life of prayer was not then considered an useless life. The intercessions of a holy man for a country, or a neighbourhood, were believed to benefit that country, or neighbourhood, in the degree in which his holy fervour tended to make those intercessions availing. The British bishops, then, went to this hermit, and, telling him all that had passed in the first conference, asked "whether, at the preaching of Augustine, they ought to forsake their traditions?" He replied, "The Lord saith 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of

me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' If, then, this Augustine is meek and lowly of heart, it is to be believed that he both himself beareth the yoke of Christ, and offers it to you to bear. But, if he is stern and haughty, it is clear that he is not of God, nor are we to regard his words." They insisted again, "And how shall we discern even this?" "Arrange," said the anchorite, "that he and his arrive first at the place where the synod is to be held; and if, at your approach, he shall rise up to you, hear him submissively, knowing that he is a servant of Christ; but if he shall make light of you, and not rise up to you, whereas you are more in number, let him also be made light of by you." On whatever ground,* "it happened that, when they came, Augustine sat on a chair." The effect of this was most unhappy. Displeasure is a bad counsellor; and the British were angry, and charging him with pride, strove to contradict all he said. In this mood, Augustine proposed to them the final terms of union, which seemed to involve the principle of submission. They answered they would do none of those things, nor have him for their archbishop; saying among themselves, "if he would not now rise up to us, how much more will he henceforth contemn us, as of no worth, if we shall begin to be subjected to him?" In Bede's time it was commonly "reported† that Augustine foretold to them, threatening, that if they would not receive peace with brethren, they would receive war from enemies; and if they would not preach the way of life to the nation of the English, they would, at their hands, suffer the vengeance of death." Ten years after this,

* Bede assigns none.

† "*Fertur prædixisse*" are Bede's words, as below of the slaughter of the monks, "*extinctos ferunt.*"

and eight after St. Augustine's departure in peace, it is said that about twelve hundred of the monks of Bangor were massacred at once in the field of battle, where they, like Moses, were interceding for their people; fifty only escaped, and the monastery was destroyed. This was a great blow to the Welsh Church, and if, during all this time, they made no efforts, by themselves, to convert their heathen neighbours, this destruction, by a heathen enemy, would seem like the judgment of God. Yet judgment is tempered with mercy, and so we may hope that to these who came to pray for their people, "after a three days fast," their death, at heathen hands, became a sort of martyrdom. After this the Welsh Church, hemmed in and oppressed, struggled on variously, yet continued to supply its saints and martyrs, and even had its men of secular learning. It was subjected to the see of Canterbury, by Henry I. A.D. 1115, which was at length confirmed by pope Innocent III. A.D. 1200.

Soon after Augustine's arrival in Britain he received the gift of the pall from Pope Gregory. The pall was a vestment, or garment, worn over the shoulders of an archbishop, a simple band or border of undyed woollen cloth, thrown over the shoulders so as to fall before and behind, a red cross being marked upon it, both in the front and back. The material and place "upon the shoulders" were to remind the bishops, after the pattern of "the good Shepherd," what care he should take of the sheep of Christ." In these times it is spoken of as a rich garment.

St. Gregory, in giving it,^u accompanied it with exhortations to cultivate humility and righteousness.

^u *Epist iv. 1; v. 56; vi. 9, 18* (in the same words as a standing formula); *ix. 121. fin.*

“Never² opposing any who speaketh for the truth ; giving thyself to works of mercy, according to thy power, yea, and beyond thy power ; having compassion with the weak ; rejoicing with the strong ; accounting others’ losses as thine own ; exulting in others’ joys, as thine own ; strict in correcting vices ; by cherishing virtues, soothing the mind of thy hearers ; in severity, holding just judgment, without anger ; when at ease, not abandoning strictness ; which if you hold fast diligently, what you will appear to have received outwardly, you will have within.” In later times, metropolitans were forbidden to exercise their office before they received it, and were required to make a promise of obedience to the patriarch.³ In these times it was only a token of good-will, an outward type of inward graces which were to be cherished.

During the time of Augustine’s residence in Britain, Christianity spread so rapidly, that he found it necessary to ordain several bishops, and to create the following Sees :—London, over which Mellitus was placed ;

² Ep. ix. 125 ; ad Max. ep. Salon.

³ See de Marca de concord. sacerdot. et Imp. L. vi. c. vi. vii. and notes on S. Greg. Epistt. p. 518, b. 586. b. c. 781. c. 935. b. c. Cointe Ann. Eccl. Franc. ad 599. Cantel. Hist. Metr. Urb. T. i. p. 1. Diss. iii. Boniface, A.D. 742, induced, although with difficulty, the archbishops of France and Germany to ask for the pall from Rome, as a mark only of honour, but with a promise of canonical obedience. The Council of Constantinople, A.D. 872, made it a rule for both east and west, that the metropolitans should be confirmed by those patriarchs, either by laying on of hands or by receiving the pall. Before Boniface, metropolitans only made a profession of their faith, and promised the bishops of their province that they would observe the canons. The African archbishops did not ask for or receive the pall. Of course not the Greek patriarchs (Garner app. ad not. c. 4, Diurni Rom. § 29. 30.) In some cases certainly it was given, as to the Greek patriarchs, by the emperors ; (the spurious “donation of Constantine” is quoted, as though he first gave it to the bishop of Rome,) in some cases, also, the leave of the emperor was asked before it was sent. The first known instance in which it was given by a bishop of Rome, was to the bishop of Ostia, who consecrated the bishops of Rome, A.D. 336 (see Lib. Pontif. Vita Marci Papæ). A.D. 501, pope Symmachus sent the pall to Cæsarius, bishop of Arles, but the form with which it was sent is not known (the form in the “liber diurnus,” p. 88, being taken from a work of much later date).

Rochester, of which town and its neighbourhood Justus was made bishop; and he consecrated Laurentius to be his successor as archbishop of Canterbury. King Ethelbert continued faithful to his teaching, and, at his desire, built the Churches of St. Paul's in London, and St. Andrew's at Rochester, to be the cathedrals of the new Sees. He survived St. Augustine a few years. That holy prelate was taken to his rest, A.D. 605, and buried in the churchyard of the monastery that goes by his name: some time subsequently his remains were removed to the cathedral of Canterbury, which at the time of his decease was only partly built. The holy Gregory fell asleep the year before, having lived to see his dearest hopes accomplished; for now the Church was flourishing anew in the English wilds, and in the hearts of her fair Saxon children; many were rescued "from wrath," and, as he longed, were, "co-heirs with the Angels;" and the silver Cross, so patiently carried through all the pitiless storms and driving mists of an inclement climate, had found a home under the consecrated walls of a British cathedral.

Amongst the lesser means by which it pleased the Divine Author of all things to work His own pleasure in blessing our country, we may record the piety of the Christian Queen Bertha, who persuaded her heathen husband to give a kindly reception to St. Augustine and his company, and to allow them freedom in carrying on their religious services. This is not said with any view of exalting Queen Bertha; she was but a woman, and the consort of a barbarous prince, and the influence of such is very limited: rather let her *success teach us that the most insignificant, the weakest,*

may do good in their generation ; may aid the progress of eternal truth, and that, not so much by prominent efforts—these are seldom the sphere of the lowly and retiring—but by fitly timed suggestions, gentle remonstrances, and habits of unobtrusive and persevering piety.

LECTURE VI.

THE KINGDOM OF KENT CONTINUED.

My last lecture was almost entirely taken up by England's "second conversion," in the reign of Ethelbert, king of Kent. We followed St. Augustine in his tedious journey to the British shores; we could almost fancy ourselves joining him and his monks, as they formed into procession on their island journey, cheering their way across the Kentish moors by the litanies of the ancient Church, sung to the sweet music of a Gregorian chant:^a we seemed to be able to track the gleaming of the large silver cross among the dense woods through which the wanderers had to penetrate, we could well imagine them to look upon it as mariners look upon their compass, as their safeguard, their guide; and, in a spiritual sense, it was this to them and more, for was it not the ensign of their faith, the herald of salvation to their heathen brethren, the pledge of love from God to man, and from man to his fellow man, the bond of union between all races of men on the face of the earth, the token of hope, and life, and victory? Outwardly, too, its presence would not be despised by them; for to the simple and serious there is a virtue in

^a "Mores Catholici," p. 549. "During St. Gregory's time the choral song was introduced into England by St. Augustine, as John the deacon relates, and in the monasteries of Britain, the divine office was

the symbol of Christianity which no worldly reasoner can explain away. If we believe Satan and his invisible crew to be around us, as we are taught in the Scriptures, (and what faithful mind will doubt this?) we cannot but think that they will shrink from coming into contact with the awful sign of their subjection to the Crucified.

We have also followed St. Augustine through the eventful years of his residence among the Saxons until we have seen him tranquilly laid at rest in his foreign grave. The fruit of such self-devotion does not appear all at once, and we must bear in mind that, great as were his successes in converting the Saxons, and to this the fact, that once as many as ten thousand received the Sacrament of Baptism at the same time is a standing evidence, yet these remarkable results were confined to particular districts, and not general through the whole country. Kent was but a small part of Britain, and the only other converted districts were Essex, over which Ethelbert's nephew Sebert reigned, and the country beyond the Thames as far as the Humber, which was either subject to Ethelbert, or tributary to him. Ethelbert was a Bretwalda, which title signifies a chief over other chieftains; a rank similar to that which Ambrosius claimed when he assumed the imperial purple.^b

All went on well as long as Ethelbert lived; the most serious check to the spread of true religion being the murder of the twelve hundred ecclesiastics at Caerleon by the infidel Adelfrid, (or Ethilfrid,) king of Northumberland, and afterwards the destruction of the

^b [Ethelbert] "was the third of the English kings that had the sovereignty of all the southern provinces that are divided from the northern by the river Humber, and the borders contiguous to the same; but the first of the kings that ascended to the heavenly kingdom."—Bede, book ii. ch. v.

noble monastery of Bangor, by the same prince.^c Bangor is said to have contained upwards of two thousand monks, and to have extended over more than a mile of ground. These monks lived under seven directors, or spiritual rulers, and the importance of such a monastery, both as a school of learning and a place of residence for the clergy, must have been very great.

But upon Ethelbert's death religion was destined to a check of another kind, which seemed, for the time, even to threaten the extinction of what had been effected by Augustine's labours; for his son Eadbald refused to profess himself a Christian. This conduct of his was the beginning of troubles, and they continued to increase until the death of the Christian king Sebert brought them to a climax. Meanwhile, Laurentius, archbishop of Canterbury, had been exerting himself, as far as he was able, in the holy cause; he had, at all risk, rebuked Eadbald for the sin in which he was living, which was of the most aggravated character,^d and he had been endeavouring to bring about an union between the Anglo-Saxon Church and those branches of the Church which were in existence in Ireland and Scotland. The Irish of those days were called Scots, they had been converted by the preaching of St. Patrick about the middle of the fifth century; by this I do not mean that there were no Christians in Ireland before, for we find, from fragments of history that have reached our times, that the Irish Christians were sufficiently important in number to have an archbishop appointed over them, by pope Celestine, as early as A.D. 441: this was Palladius, and he is especially

^c *Bancor Iscoed.*

^d He had married his father's wife.

spoken of as being sent to take charge of the Christians in Ireland.* From Ireland, too, a branch of the Church had been settled in Scotland; St. Columba, a native of Ireland, having penetrated among the northern Picts, where he was successful in the conversion of a whole nation of them, and founded the celebrated monastery of Iona, or Icolmkill, sometimes also called Hye, the ruins of which, with its beautiful cathedral church, are still seen rising out of the sea as you approach the island.

I am sorry to say that Laurentius was as unfortunate in his efforts with the Scotch, as had been his predecessor with the British bishops; they neither allowed his authority, nor accepted his communion.[†] You will recollect that Sebert, Ethelbert's nephew, was king over the East Saxons in Essex; the reason that his death so much affected the Church was, that neither of his three sons would submit to her laws, but all relapsed openly, and at once, into paganism; the people fell away with them, and the bishops, Mellitus and Justus, persecuted on all sides, resolved at last to withdraw from a country where there seemed no longer any hope of making converts, or of preserving the foot-

* Palladius, as Prosper informs us, was consecrated bishop by pope Celestine, and sent "ad Scotos in Christum credentes," i.e., to the converted Scots in Ireland.—Collier, vol. I. c. 1. p. 117, Bede I. ch. 13. And here by the barbarous island turning Christian, as Prosper speaks, we are not to suppose that there was no Christianity in the country before Palladius's mission, for Kirianus, Albeus, Declanus, and Ibarus, had made some progress in the country before his time, and were all of the episcopal order. How then is Prosper's testimony to be reconciled with this account? I mean as to his calling Palladius the first bishop of the Scots. This seeming difficulty of the *Primus Episcopus*, archbishop Usher disentangles, by interpreting it "*primæ sedis episcopus*;" so that, though the Scots had bishops amongst them before, yet Palladius was their first archbishop.—Ibid.

[†] "For bishop Dagan coming to us, not only refused to eat with us, but even to take his repast in the same house where we were entertained."—Laurentius's Letter to the Scottish Prelates, Bede II. ch. iv. "He, [Laurentius] endeavoured to confirm them in Catholic unity, but what he gained by doing so the present times declare."—Ibid.

ing they had already gained. Before taking this final step, they consulted Laurentius, who did not withhold his consent, but on the contrary, seemed prepared to follow them to France, whither they retired with all convenient speed. Not so Laurentius, for, however he might seem to agree to the necessity of such a measure, when it came to the point of leaving the beautiful flock, to which he had been appointed guide, alone and unprotected, his heart misgave him, and, although he continued to make preparation for his journey, he could not satisfy himself that he was quite in the right in undertaking it; torn to pieces between his doubts and fears, he determined to spend the last night of his stay in the Church of the "blessed Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul," and there he poured forth many prayers for the English Church, and wept bitter tears over her threatened extinction: he then lay down to rest; a vision recalled him to his duty; and when he awoke in the morning, it was not to set sail from the British shore, but to go boldly into the presence of the pagan king Eadbald, and narrate to him the events of the night. And it pleased the Almighty that what Laurentius told Eadbald should make a powerful impression on him; he became deeply moved, the bright sources of repentance were unlocked, he was filled with abhorrence for his sin, disengaged himself from it, renounced idolatry, and his kingdom was saved. The bishops, Mellitus and Justus, were quickly recalled, and returned joyfully to their sees; but it was some time before the people of London would receive their bishop; having thrown them out of the Church, they were unwilling

again to submit to it, "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.^b"

Still Christianity gained ground, and king Ercombert, who reigned in Kent next after Eadbald, was more zealous for the holy cause than those who had preceded him. He it was who brought about the utter destruction of all the Saxon idols in his kingdom, for he ordered them to be broken up, and punished any who were detected in offering homage to them. He likewise established the Lent Fast by law. We are told that bishop Honorius, in his reign, first divided Kent into parishes.¹ Malmesbury says of this Ercombert, that "he was famous for his piety towards God, and his love to his country ;^k" and it was probably for these qualities that his father chose him to be king after him, in preference to his eldest son Ermenfrid: his death took place A.D. 664, and his son Egbert succeeded him. Egbert's first act was the dreadful crime of murdering his two cousins, the sons of his uncle Ermenfrid, to secure his own possession of the throne. We trace the just retribution of his sin in the fact that, at his death, neither of his children were permitted to reign, although, afterwards, Edric the elder disturbed the usurper, Lothair, in his tranquillity, and reigned for two years. Lothair fell in battle, leaving a son Richard, who fled to Germany, and whose tomb is at Lucca in Tuscany, where he lies buried under the title of king of England.¹ After this there

^b S. John iii. 19.

¹ Baker's Chronicle, p. 5.

^k Note to Rapin's Hist., p. 58

¹ Rapin. He is reputed a saint, and the father of a saintly family. His sons Willibald and Winibald were helpers of St. Boniface in the conversion of Germany. His daughter Walburga was an abbess in that country. There is an account extant of Willibald's visit to the Holy Land, and of what he saw there.

is nothing in the history of Kent, as a kingdom, that I need dwell upon particularly. It seems to have been a scene of continued troubles and disasters until Egbert united the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, A.D. 827.

THE KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

THE next of the Saxon kingdoms which claims our attention is Northumberland, which formed at first two distinct monarchies. Ælla, a Saxon prince, invaded and conquered one part, over which he reigned under the title of the King of the Deiri;^m Ida, another chief, equally famed for his valour, and also a Saxon, seized Northumberland and Durham, which he ruled as king of Bernicia. The grandson of Ida marrying the daughter of Ælla, both kingdoms were united into one. Four kings are mentioned as having reigned successively in Bernicia before this union took place; their names alone, and the dates of their deaths, are known.ⁿ The true heir of Ælla was the young Edwin, brother to Acca, of whose marriage we have just been speaking. Banished from his country at three years old, by his sister's ambition, he was protected and succoured by Ceorl, king of the Mercians, and afterwards by Redwald, king of East-Anglia, in whose court he was living at the age of thirty; having in the meantime undergone numerous perils, through the malice

^m A.D. 547, he died in 559.—See Rapin.

ⁿ Adda, who died A.D. 559; Glappa, who died A.D. 566; Fridulph, who died A.D. 572; and Athelric, who died A.D. 586. Athelfrid commenced his nominal reign A.D. 590, but he had governed Bernicia for many years previously.

of his enemies and Adelfrid's secret plots against his life. He is the same wicked prince who, when the twelve hundred and fifty monks met on the field of battle near Caerleon, to petition Heaven for victory, caused them to be murdered on the spot; fifty of the number only escaping. He afterwards marched into Wales and destroyed the noble monastery of Bangor, the strength and glory of the British Church.^o Near this place his power met with its match, for several of the Welch princes combined their forces, and defeated him in the open field with much slaughter; upon which he retired to his own kingdom, being "permitted," it is said, "to retain his possessions north of the Humber;"^p an expression which gives us the impression that his defeat must have been a complete one: but it did not put a stop to his ambition, and he now turned his thoughts again to the destruction of Edwin, feeling that while he lived his own throne was insecure. Yet was Adelfrid far too powerful for any of the neighbouring monarchs to venture to assert Edwin's right, and even Redwald was at last almost persuaded to break his faith with the young prince, and seemed on the point of giving him up to his cruel uncle. Edwin had imagined himself safe in the court of Redwald; great therefore was his surprise when, through the friendship of one of the courtiers, he received notice of what was hanging over him. The communication was made to him in the night, in the palace garden, and his friend's advice was that he should immediately seek safety in flight; this, however, he was unwilling to do; his life had been passed in a succession of dangers and fears, and weary

^o See kingdom of Kent.

^p See the Cymry, p. 145.

of it, and still doubting that Redwald could deal so treacherously with him, he resolved at first to return and await the event at the palace ; but after some hours of suspense and indecision, which he spent in wandering about in the darkness and silence of the night, he gave up all thoughts of returning, and sat down on a stone to consider what he had better do to escape the malice of his enemies. In a few minutes he was startled out of his stupor, by seeing a tall figure standing before him. For the moment he was greatly alarmed, but the stranger spoke kindly to him, and, to his astonishment, shewed a perfect knowledge of his history, his present difficulties, and the state of depression into which they had plunged him. His advice to him was to take courage, for that his trials were at an end, he said, and he informed him that Redwald had changed his mind, and did not mean to betray him to Adelfrid ; and that he would shortly recover his kingdom, and be the greatest prince England had yet seen on the throne ; “and when this shall have been brought to pass,” added the speaker, “if one shall then come to you, and teach you a holier way of life than you at present know, will you obey him and embrace it ?” Full of gratitude and emotion, the young prince readily promised that he would. At that moment he would have promised anything to his singular and mysterious visitant, but worldly honour was not what the stranger sought from Edwin ; “He Who is able and willing to raise you to this height of grandeur,” he replied, “requires nothing from you but to embrace His doctrine, and obey His precepts.” Having so said, he approached, and laid *his hand on Edwin’s head* with the solemn words,

“Remember this sign ;” and disappearing through the gloom, was seen no more. He had not been long gone when the same friend, who had warned Edwin of his danger, returned to acquaint him that, through the queen’s intercession, Redwald had resolved to continue faithful to him, and to protect him from his uncle ; nor was this all, for he afterwards levied an army, and, marching into Northumbria, gave Adelfrid battle, defeated him (for he was slain in the engagement, and his whole army routed), reinstated Edwin on the throne of his father, and aided him in establishing himself in his kingdom.

Years passed by, and Edwin’s remembrance of his mysterious visitor had almost passed away with them. He had become a powerful prince, held the rank of Bretwalda, and had married Ethelburga, a Christian princess, daughter of Ethelbert, king of Kent. She had, both by her own persuasions, and by those of the holy bishop Paulinus, who had accompanied her from her father’s court, brought the subject of Edwin’s conversion frequently before him, but it does not appear that he connected it in any way with what he had heard on the night of his escape from Redwald’s court. Although often upon the point of declaring himself a Christian, he still hesitated ; he could not make up his mind to the step. He is said to have been of a mild and peaceful disposition, and those who surrounded him were many of them warmly attached to him. One instance of this regard is on record, in the case of Lilla, an officer of his army, who sacrificed his life for his sovereign, by throwing himself between the king and the poisoned blade of an assassin, whose intention to murder Edwin he had suddenly perceived. This assas-

sin had been hired to stab the king by Cuichelm, king of the West Saxons, and one of those to whom Edwin's power was in the highest degree obnoxious. So keen was the thrust, and so well aimed, that Edwin did not altogether escape a wound, the dagger, after passing through the body of the faithful adherent, reaching his master. This providential escape appears to have softened Edwin again towards Christianity, for he could not help connecting his subsequent recovery from the deadly effect of the poison with the prayers of Paulinus, as well as the restoration of his queen, who, having at this time given birth to a daughter, was considered to be at the point of death, when the good bishop petitioned Heaven in her favour, and she very speedily rallied. Be this as it may, Edwin did not even then become a Christian, although he allowed his infant daughter to receive the Sacrament of Baptism ; upon which occasion twelve of his nobles were also baptized. Soon after this he was one day sitting alone, which appears to have been his custom, full of anxious thought, and debating earnestly with himself the claims of that religion to which he was already in heart a convert. At this moment Paulinus suddenly stood before him, and laying his right hand upon Edwin's head, " Do you recognize this token ? " he enquired. The astonished and frightened king would have fallen on his knees at the feet of Paulinus, but was withheld by that holy man from offering this homage to his fellow sinner. " Fulfil thy promise, Edwin," he cried ; " delay no longer to embrace the faith, and to keep His commandments Who has done so much for thee already." King Edwin *did* fulfil his promise, and with him numbers of

his subjects renounced paganism, the pagan high-priest, Coifi, being the first to lead the way ; and so great was his zeal, that seizing a lance, and mounting the king's charger, a thing quite contrary to custom, and therefore likely to excite the greatest astonishment among the people, he rode boldly towards one of the temples, hurled a lance against the door, and in a few minutes the surrounding nobles, who had followed him out of curiosity, catching the infection of his zeal, set fire to it, and razed it to the ground. This temple was called Godmundingham, and was situated in the East-Riding of Yorkshire.

Edwin's next act was to build a Church ; it was of wood, and dedicated to St. Peter. Can you believe that this little wooden Church was built where now stands the beautiful York Minster, and became the Cathedral of its first Saxon archbishop ? That archbishop was Paulinus.^a At the ensuing festival of Easter, king Edwin was publicly baptized by him, and with Edwin two of his sons by a former wife. This little wooden sanctuary also witnessed the dedication of several of his other children, two of whom died in their white baptismal robes, and were laid at rest, side by side, within its sacred walls.^r

Paulinus afterwards commenced building a Church worthier of Him to Whose honour churches are reared, but he did not live to complete it.^s I have met with a

^a " He (Edwin) was baptized at York, on the Holy-day of Easter, being the 12th of April, in the Church of St. Peter, the Apostle, which he himself had built of timber, whilst he was being catechized and instructed in order to receive baptism. In that city also he appointed the see of the bishopric of his instructor and bishop, Paulinus." Bede ii. 14.

^r Ibid.

^s " He took care, by the direction of the same Paulinus, to build, in the same place, a larger and nobler Church, of stone, in the midst whereof that

very interesting account of the way in which he baptized his converts ; they were in such numbers, that he was obliged to travel from place to place to instruct them, and king Edwin went with him. On one occasion he was thirty-six days employed in catechizing, from morning until night, without intermission, nor had he even time to eat his meals. There were then no churches to receive the newly-born, as types of the spiritual building into which they had entered ; there were no fonts to hold the pure water which was the element of their sanctification. A little simple stream gliding through the soft grass, and, sparkling as it went, was sufficient to bless the rite ; and the river Glen, and the waters of the Swale are mentioned as having been the honoured means of conveying the gift of regeneration to the anxious and believing multitude, who crowded in thousands round the holy archbishop, drinking in life from his doctrine, and receiving at his consecrated hands the pledge and earnest of endless life and happiness. The river Glen, and the bright waters of the Swale^u flow peacefully on, they have not sunk into the earth, they still dance beneath the sunbeam, and glisten to the pale starlight ; thus have they welled out from age to age in continued purity, and their stream, with the stream of time, has borne down to us the living record of these early acts of faith and love. Verily, although “they have neither speech nor language, voices are heard

same oratory which he had first erected should be enclosed.” Bede ii. 14. Mr. Ayliffe Poole says that parts of this fabric were discovered beneath the choir of the present Cathedral, during the repairs rendered necessary by the mad act of the incendiary Jonathan Martin. See his “Lectures on Churches.”

^u Near this river, at a place called Campodonum, Paulinus built a Church, which was soon afterwards burned down, but the altar, being of stone, escaped fire.—See Bede, book ii. chap. 14.

among them ; their sound is gone forth into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.²” Loudly do they call upon us to awake from the lap of luxury, and the cold calculating spirit of worldly incredulity, and by maintaining a higher standard of faith, and emulating the simple devotedness of our Saxon ancestors, to save our generation from the curse of a mammon-seeking idolatry, and sanctify again the green earth of our native hills, to be the abode of that Righteousness, Whose “work is peace, and its effect quietness and assurance for ever.”

King Edwin fully bore out, by his good conduct, all that might be expected of him ; he was a truly Christian prince, beloved, honoured, and regretted. He fell in battle against the heathen king Penda, A.D. 633, six years and a half after his baptism.

In the administration of the laws of justice he never had a rival ; and, so sacred were the rights of property during his reign, that a child might have travelled with a purse of gold through the length and breadth of his dominions, and no one would have molested him. Nor did he cease to use every means in his power for the conversion of his subjects to the Christian faith ; not even resting here, for through his unwearied efforts, East Anglia also renounced paganism. As a sign of his power and authority as Bretwalda, an ornament in the shape of a globe was generally carried before him. He was only forty-eight years of age when he met his fate.

² Psalm xix. 3, 4.

³ Isaiah xxxii. 17.

LECTURE VII.

THE KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBERLAND CONTINUED.

IN almost every instance of the conversion from paganism to Christianity, of a province of the Heptarchy, there has been a reaction afterwards, and a partial, and sometimes a general, return to idolatry. This was the case in Kent, Essex, and East Anglia, and the same may be said of Northumberland, which went through sad and grievous changes after the premature death of the good and powerful king Edwin. Such a reaction from truth to error is not an unnatural occurrence, even among the enlightened and educated ; far less is it to be wondered at among a barbarous people, whose enjoyments, entirely of a rude and lawless nature, are sorely circumscribed by the precepts of religion ; whose education has taught them to look upon aggression as lawful and meritorious, provided only that it be attended with success, on humility as meanness, and on a calm and peace-loving disposition as a sign of a degraded and spiritless nature.

Truth is, in fact, received, believed, and acted upon, until it opposes itself to sin, but from the moment that it is brought into conflict with a favourite vice, worldly interests, or worldly pomp and power, from that moment it becomes unpopular and distasteful ; it is first hated, and then trampled upon ; and men say they have discovered that it was *not* truth to cloak their own re-

jection of it. Happy is it for us all, that He, in Whose "light we see light," does not at once withdraw the light from us, but bears long and patiently with our wilful blindness, "shining more and more unto the perfect day." "His compassions fail not; they are new every morning."^a

When Edwin fell on the field of battle, Osfrid, one of his sons, shared his father's fate; the other cruelly harassed by Cadwallader, a British king who had assisted Penda in his attack, gave himself up a prisoner to the latter monarch, and was by his command treacherously murdered. Cadwallader, a Christian in name, but a barbarian in conduct, burning with that vindictive feeling towards the Saxons, which is such a blot upon the character of the ancient race, harassed the wretched Northumbrians in every possible way, pillaging and destroying without mercy. For a while no one dared to raise his head against this oppression, but, at length the inhabitants of the province, consulting together, determined to appoint to the regal dignity; and after much confusion, during which there was a revival of the ancient quarrel between the Deïri, and Bernicians, Northumberland was again divided, the Deïri choosing as their monarch Osric, a kinsman of Edwin's, and the Northumbrians fixing upon Eanfrid, a son of Athelfrid. Eanfrid had been educated with his two brothers, Oswald, and Oswy, in the monastery of Hye, or Iona, in Scotland; but the first act of his sovereignty was to abjure the faith into which he had been baptized; and Osric doing the same, the state of things was soon so changed in that once happy kingdom that archbishop

^a Lam. iii. 22, 23.

Paulinus could remain there no longer, but sought for safety in flight. In his melancholy journey from the scene of his labours, he was accompanied by Edwin's widow, Ethelburga, and the last survivors of his family, his young daughter Eanfleda, and an infant son, and grandson; both of whom died afterwards in a foreign court. This little group of sufferers reached Kent in safety, under the guardianship of a trustworthy and faithful soldier, who had served in their father's army. Among the acts of self-devotion which characterized those stormy times we must admire that of the deacon James, who remained at York alone, braving all persecutions and dangers, and keeping up the services of the Church, and her pure teaching, unaided and unhelped but by that Divine Power Who brings strength out of weakness, and often denudes His Church of all outward support that an unbelieving world may own that His Presence is in her of a truth. After his arrival in Kent archbishop Paulinus was very soon called to the see of Rochester, in the administration of the duties of which he ended his days in peace.

Northumbria continued but a very short time plunged into darkness; it was but a cloud that had been permitted to shroud the sun for a brief moment, and the lonely deacon at York lived to see truth revived, and the aisles of the Church there thronged again with worshippers.

The judgments of Heaven fell on the heads of the apostate princes; both were slain, and Oswald, another fair name in English history, being successful in conquering the savage Cadwallader, was raised to the throne of his fathers, to teach his people that its

splendour was not inconsistent with the humility and self-denial of a Christian life. Unlike his brother, who so soon forgot the teaching of the holy monks of Iona, he carried the love of the Cross so far that he had a wooden one erected on the field of battle before he met Cadwallader, and kneeling down beside it, and calling on his soldiers to do the same, he sought and obtained a blessing on the termination of a war, which he had undertaken solely for the safety of his nation.

One instance of Oswald's self-denial has come down to us. He was once on the point of beginning a meal ; it is said that it was on Easter Day, and a blessing was about to be asked by good bishop Aidan, whom he had summoned to his court from Scotland, to assist him in the re-conversion of his people, and whom he afterwards made his constant friend and companion. All was ready, and the first article of food, a great delicacy, was brought in on a dish of silver curiously wrought ; at the same time it was stated that many poor were waiting outside. By the king's order the meat before him was immediately taken from the table and given to them, and when they had eaten it, the dish itself was broken, and divided among them.

Oswald's reign lasted nine years, and was prosperous ; his kingdom increasing greatly in extent, and the surrounding provinces awarding him the palm of dominion in the title of Bretwalda. He was another of the kings who became a victim to the Mercian tyrant Penda ; his dying words, " spare the souls of my people, O Lord," have remained to us ; they are beautiful as his life, for the fragrance of the Cross has been breathed upon them.

After his death the kingdom was for a time divided, Oswy, his brother, reigning over Northumberland, and Oswin, another member of his family, over the Deīri. This latter prince was much beloved, and remarkable for his humility. He fell a victim to Oswy's jealousy and ambition, being privately murdered, by his authority, in the ninth year of his reign. It does not appear, however, that the death of Oswin gave Oswy his longed-for power and dominion, for the Deīrians, justly incensed at his treachery, placed Adelwald,^b a son of his victim, upon the throne of his father ; but not long after, he also made a private and treacherous league against Oswy to which the wicked Penda was a party, and their plan failing, they both paid its forfeiture with their lives ; and thus Oswy was at last sole monarch of the united kingdoms of Northumberland and of the Deīri, sharing the government with a favourite son named Alfred, who is said not to have been legitimate, and consequently, disliked by the people. The murder of Oswin is a sad blot upon Oswy's character, of which, in other respects, much can be told that is favourable ; and more particularly with regard to the interests of religion,^c which he

^b Ethelwald.

^c The habit of making conditional religious vows seems quite a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons, and was perhaps the result of their semi-conversion. If the vow were successful, the scale often turned in favour of Christianity, and the individual who had taken the vow became at once an altered character. This may have been Oswy's case after Penda's defeat. It appears that he met Penda, as did his other victims, unwillingly, and to avert a battle with him, had offered him large gifts, all of which were rejected. Finding this, Oswy exclaimed, " if the pagan will not accept of our gifts, let us offer them to Him that will, the Lord our God." And Bede tells us that " king Oswy, pursuant to the vow that he had made to our Lord, returned thanks to God for the victory, and gave his daughter Elfleda, who was scarce a year old, to be consecrated to him in perpetual virginity ; delivering also twelve small portions of land, wherein earthly warfare should cease, and in which there should be a perpetual residence and subsistence for monks to follow the warfare which is spiritual, and pray diligently for the peace of his nation." Bede book III. c. xxiv.

shewed a great zeal in forwarding to the best of his ability, making many and successful efforts in the conversion, not only of his own but of the surrounding states. In his later years the thoughts of his crime returned upon his conscience with such overwhelming force that, by the advice of his queen, he built, and endowed the monastery of Ingetling upon the spot where the murder of Oswin had taken place ; there prayers were daily offered for his own pardon and the repose of king Oswin's soul. And now a link in the religious history of these times seems supplied by the fact that this lady, whose influence over her husband was a means of bringing him to a sense of his sin, was no other than Eanfleda,^d the daughter of good king Edwin. Nor was the above the only point in which her influence was beneficial ; but to make you understand this, I must go a little way from the direct line of history, and bring before you the great religious question of the day, viz : at what time of the year the Easter, or Paschal Feast ought to be celebrated. For, as in St. Augustine's time, this was still a subject of disunion between the different branches of the Church, harassing the minds of the clergy, and exciting their people. You will remember that Oswald had brought Aidan, the great teacher and saint of the Northumbrians, from Iona in Scotland, and that he had been educated there himself. Nothing could exceed the strict lives of the monks of Hye ; it was less a monastery than a college, somewhat in the Bangor style, where an immense throng of ecclesiastics, including many bishops, lived in the most beautiful order and harmony, evangelizing the spot on

^d Bede book III. c. 15.

which they resided, yet ready to start to any sphere of distant labour required of them.* St. Columba, the original founder, was the son of an Irish noble, who, taking orders about the middle of the sixth century, made a journey into Scotland, where, by his preaching he converted and Christianized hundreds of the savage Picts and Culdees, and established for his successors that quiet home which was to form the nucleus, or centre, of future enterprises for the entire civilization of those wild northern tribes. There, too, he ended his days in holy retirement and peace, and his white horse, probably the companion of his former dangers, is said to have been employed in carrying the milk of the flocks from the fold to the monastery.

Now Columban's views and teaching, having been imbibed through the Irish Church, and that Church claiming, through the Gallican, a succession from the Apostle St. John, and not from St. Peter, the monks of Hye were, it seems, equally strong with the old British Church against the Roman mode of keeping Easter &c. &c., looking at the interference of the Roman prelates with jealousy, on their customs (where different from their own) as innovations, and setting themselves obstinately to oppose any attempt at uniformity of worship.

In Oswy's court the king naturally followed Aidan and the teachers of his youth in these points of difference, while Eanfleda, his queen, as naturally sided with


* "We know, from the Ulster Annals, as cited by archbishop Usher and others, that there were bishops actually members of the monastery itself." Perceval's Apology, p. 46. "But whatsoever he [St. Columban] was himself, this we know for certain, that he left successors renowned for their continency, their love of God, and observance of monastic rules." Bede book iii. c. iv.

the venerable Paulinus, the instructor of her early years, and with the manners and customs of the Anglo-Roman sees as left to them by St. Augustine. Thus, when one party was keeping Easter, it often happened that in the same court the austerities of Lent were still in full force among the others ; and this was the cause of great inconvenience and disunion, and many a heart-ache, deep in proportion to the earnestness in duty of the respective parties ; for how can such things be matters of indifference, or what are called non-essentials, to the really anxious ? If they do not always divide in spirit, they cause sad outward separations, and tend to irritate and perplex the weak and uneducated, and to foster party spirit, and endless disputes. Eanfleda, then, was determined to have a synod convened to put these matters, if possible, beyond dispute, and her husband giving his consent to the measure, it was held at Whitby[†] in the monastery of the abbess St. Hilda, on which occasion, the talent and eloquent reasoning of Wilfrid, afterwards bishop of York, but then known as the preceptor of Alfred, Oswy's son, seemed to turn the scale in favour of the Roman views ; and, at any rate, so far decided the question, that many of the Scottish prelates united with the Roman clergy, and those who refused, returned into their own country.

In this remarkable synod Wilfrid had on his side the queen, Alfred, his pupil, then reigning over the Deïri, James the Deacon, bishop Agatho, and St. Ronan, a Scotch monk famous in the annals of those times : and he was opposed by king Oswy, Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, (a monastery founded not long back by Aidan,

[†] Then called Streaneshalch ; it was convened A.D. 664.

and also an episcopal see,) and by the celebrated and holy St. Chad, or Cedde, who afterwards conformed to the Roman Church, and even submitted to be reconsecrated bishop by Theodore of Canterbury, not from any intentional acknowledgment of a defect in his Scottish orders, but out of deep humility, making the following beautiful reply to Theodore's objection to the validity of his consecration—"that, if he (Theodore) questioned the manner of his promotion, he was willing to lay down his authority, for that he always thought himself unworthy of the episcopal character, and took it upon him only in obedience to his superiors." Wilfrid, the prelate, brought as above before our notice, was one of the most remarkable characters of his age. After this brilliant beginning of his career he fell into strange vicissitudes and persecutions; but these belong so entirely to ecclesiastical history and would occupy so much time to narrate, that I shall only make this slight reference to them. His troubles were indeed such as to give great interest to his character, and to stamp upon it those signs of sanctity which belong so peculiarly to this period; a period "when saints to giant stature grew," and our own England was called the "land of saints." Yet Wilfrid's character has also its dark side, either through the malice of his enemies in misrepresenting its leading features, or the infirmities which cling to the most noble natures, before successive trials have tamed them down into the patient and humble bearing He displayed, Who should be their Pattern, Head, and Guide. Wilfrid is said (I know not how truly,) to have loved pomp and splendour, and to have been luxurious, ambitious, and unbending. If this was



the case, he met the punishment of such failings, in many a long year of bitter calumnies and sufferings, shewing by patient submission their purifying effects on his character, and living on through the reigns of Egfrid, Alfred, and Osred, princes little worthy of notice, except for the part they took for or against that great man.

King Oswy died A.D. 670, and the remaining kings of Northumberland can scarcely claim interest enough to occupy our time and attention any further ; the reign of Ethelred, who mounted the throne in A.D. 774, being alone remarkable for the first of those ravages of the Danes, which afterwards depopulated the country. In this instance they pillaged the monastery of Lindisfarne, and destroyed Tinmouth monastery, but suffered total shipwreck on their way back to Denmark. Ethelred was also a contemporary and friend of the great Charlemagne. There was no settled monarchical power after his death in Northumbria, although a few nominal kings struggled through a brief interval to maintain their rights to the crown of their fathers. Egbert ended these disputes by annexing that country to the other provinces of the Heptarcy under his dominions, A.D. 837.

THE KINGDOM OF THE EAST SAXONS.

A slight sketch of the East Saxons in Essex, which kingdom comes next in the order of our history, will be sufficient. Essex has been already mentioned as a tributary province to Kent, in Ethelbert's time, and its conversion under Sebert was, as you will remember, the fruit of St. Augustine's pious labours. Of the kings

who preceded Sebert scarcely anything is known ; of his successors, little besides the fact that their apostasy from the faith was followed by a bloody death on the field of battle. It was during Oswy's reign over the kingdom of Northumberland that the East Saxons were re-converted to Christianity ; he is said to have been the means, under Providence, of this happy event. He was fond of Sigebert, king of Essex, and often visited him, and in those visits he would reason with him, pointing out the absurdity of attributing to dumb idols either life or action ; and thus he at last prevailed upon him to renounce idolatry. Sigebert, who was afterwards surnamed "the Good," was, with his whole court, baptized at Admurum, near the sea ; and Oswy sent to the Middle Angles for the famous Cedde, or St. Chad, to complete the conversion of the province. The cause of Sigebert's death shews his change to have been real ; he was murdered by two brothers, whom St. Chad had excommunicated for gross sins of which they had been guilty, and who alleged as an excuse for their wickedness in murdering their king, that they were disgusted with him for being so mean as to forgive his enemies. But Sigebert had not been wholly blameless, for he had allowed himself to associate and eat with one of these wicked nobles, contrary to the teaching of the Church, and the obedience due to her minister. Returning from this banquet he was met by St. Chad, when, full of remorse, he threw himself from his horse at that good man's feet, and besought his pardon ; he received the forgiveness of the Church, but the temporal punishment due to his offence was not remitted. After his death Swithhelm succeeded him, but did not reign

long, and then we hear of another relapse towards paganism, on the part of the East Saxons, in the reign of Sigheri, and Sebbi, who were joint kings over Essex for some years ; Sebbi, however, remaining firm in the faith. Sigheri gave as a reason for his apostasy, the pestilence, which was then raging everywhere, and which was interpreted by many as being sent by the gods, because their temples had been destroyed ; a view that does not give us a very high impression of the intelligence of the people, or the strength of their principles.

It may perhaps be interesting just to notice here, that two of the famous churches of the East Saxons had been built respectively on the sites of the temples of Diana and Apollo ; the first was St Paul's Cathedral, the last, St. Peter's Cornhill, or St. Peter's in the West, as it was then called ; which having been founded by Lucius, was restored, or rebuilt, by king Sebert.

We have elsewhere other accounts of the extent of the dreadful pestilence above alluded to, and that it was not confined to Essex ; it is said to have done more towards confirming the sway of the Saxons all over England, and diminishing the old Britons to a mere degenerated remnant of their former selves, than all the battles and disasters of preceding years. The Britons, in fact, looked upon it as a sign that their kingdom was taken from them, and given over by God to their enemies. At this time Essex was not an independent state, it was very little better than a tributary province to Mercia, and Wolfhere, then the Mercian king, did, we are told, greatly take to heart the apostasy of the East Saxons, and sent bishop Jaruman to re-convert them ;

a work in which he was, by God's blessing, eminently successful.

After Sebbi came the reign of Offa, a young prince of much promise, and great personal beauty, who astonished and disappointed his people by retiring from the throne, and taking the monastic habit at Rome, in the eighth year of his reign. Swithered, the last king of Essex, is thought to have held the regal dignity to a great age, but as Essex was now part of Mercia, its history, as well as our present lecture, may be brought to a conclusion.

LECTURE VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF EAST ANGLIA.

It is very difficult to follow out such a history as this of the Anglo-Saxons, where the separate provinces must be treated of one after another, faithfully and clearly, although the events which took place in them may be said to belong to the same period. In remembering and arranging these events, and trying to take a correct view of the period, the mind is apt to get wearied and confused ; it cannot, without a strain, keep up their connection, and realize to itself that many of the remarkable characters who have been brought forward into light and interest, were contemporaries, and may have known and visited each other ; and that between the beginning and ending of the whole course of events, a few years only elapsed. Indeed, a century in the Saxon annals teems with such important successions and changes, that it is more like an impetuous torrent than the still stream of time with us ; a man might, in those days, seem to live three lives in one, if he remained to an old age. But of this honour royalty had little chance, nor were those much safer who were less distinguished. The only way of meeting such a difficulty as we have been describing, is to throw the mind as much as possible into the times themselves, catching their leading features as we best can ; and, for this purpose, a pause now and then is almost necessary, to sum up a

few of the details through which we have waded, arrange and class them.

We are now half way through the history of the seven provinces, and more than half way through what is of the highest importance as connected with them. Of the kingdom of East Anglia, of which I shall next have to treat, you already know something, for it has been made famous as affording a refuge to Edwin, during his long persecutions; the same may be said of Mercia, whose king, Penda, is familiar to us. Sussex was converted later than the rest, and does not seem to have risen until then into notice; while the most striking events in Wessex will fall naturally into their place by and bye.

I shall not stop now to consider the manners of the Saxons at this period, but only the relative position of the events, and of the men whose influence, acted upon by the divine control and guidance, conducted them to such important results.

Thus it was in the early part of the fifth and during the sixth century, that the feuds between the Britons and Saxons having subsided, as well as those with the Irish and Picts, and the limits of their respective territories being settled, St. Patrick converted a large part of Ireland; St. Columban and St. Ninian established the faith in Scotland and among the borderers; St. Dubricius and Iltutus raised schools of learning on the banks of the Wye, which became the nurseries of numerous saints and men of renown, and during which St. Sampson, St. David, St. Padern, and St. Theliau, or Teilo, lived and laboured. Of these last, who were great friends and visited Jerusalem together, it is said

that "St. David performed Divine Service in the most beautiful and impressive manner, St. Teilo sang or chanted well, and St. Padern excelled in preaching." Then, too, arose the famed St. Petrok, to the memory of whose labours Cornwall and the West of England bear ample testimony; Kentigern and St. Asaph, in North Wales, were also famed for their holiness,* and St. Martin, in Gaul, and St. Jerome, at Rome, living in the same period, and actually holding communication with some of these our British saints, an idea of Apostolic sanctity is attached to the men, and a stamp of unity impressed on the Church which it would be difficult to disbelieve or unlearn. In the end of the sixth century St. Augustine visited England.

Between the sixth and seventh centuries we may place the conversion of Kent, and of the kingdoms of Northumberland, Essex, and East Anglia first, and latterly of the remaining provinces of the Heptarchy; the remarkable reigns of Ethelbert, Sigebert, Edwin, Oswald, and Oswy, the influences in favour of Christianity of the queens Bertha, Ethelburga, and Eanfleda; while the Church in England gloried in the names of, first Augustine, then Laurentius, Paulinus, James the Deacon, and many other self-devoted ecclesiastics. In the latter part of this century and through the next come into notice the holy Aidan, St. Wilfrid, St. Chad, St. Cuthbert, and St. Guthlac, John the Singer, John of Beverly, bishop of York, and (famed for his sanctity), Egbert, who persuaded the Scottish monks to submit to the catholic mode of keeping Easter, Boniface, an

* St. Ninian died A.D. 432; St. Patrick 493; Dubricius 522; St. Columba 570; St. Kentigern 560; St. Sampson, St. David, St. Padern, and St. Thelian lived from 522 to 548; St. Asaph died 590; St. Petrok about 548.

English bishop, who received the crown of martyrdom at Mentz, in Friezland, Erkenwald, who succeeded St. Cedde,^b as bishop of London, the venerable Bede, Alcuin, and others. During this time Charles the Great established a new order of things on the continent, and on the thrones of the Heptarchy sat Offa and Ina, each in their turn important personages in English history. The above summary is rather meant as a connecting link, than a strict chronological statement.

Of the kingdom of the East Angles there is nothing remarkable to be learned until Redwald, the third king in order from its first commencement, gave Edwin a refuge in his court.^c Redwald afterwards renounced paganism, through Edwin's persuasions; he did not continue faithful in his profession of Christianity, but relapsed so far into idolatry as to suffer the same altar to be used for pagan rites, and the Christian sacrifice. Such a declension led, as might be expected, to disasters, and when Redwald ended his unblest career, a three years anarchy succeeded; his son Eorpwald fell under the knife of the assassin, and it was not until his brother Sigebert, who had been educated in France, assumed the reins of government, that the wretched East Anglians had any rest or calm. Nobly and honourably did this good king set about the task of restoration; he knew through Whom alone sceptres and hearts are wielded, and he made a return to the faith the foundation of all his efforts at improvement. Felix, a most

^b Not to be confounded with his brother Ceadda (St. Chadd), who was bishop of Litchfield. Bede says "The four brothers we have mentioned, Cedde and Cynebil, Celin and Ceadda, which it is a rare thing to meet with, were all celebrated priests of our Lord, and two of them also come to be bishops." *Eccles Hist.* b. c. c. 23.

^c See the History of Northumbria.

holy bishop, undertook the gigantic work of conversion ; Furseus, an Irish monk, equally famed for his blameless life and manners, lent his aid, and very soon thousands were to be seen flocking to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, and a bishop's see was established at Dunwich, in Suffolk,^d round which town fifty Churches arose in different directions, giving us an idea of the zeal that was mingled in those days with the first love of a reclaimed and grateful people ; for idolatry once overthrown in their hearts, the sense of freedom was keener with them than with us, because they knew better than we do from what a fearful thralldom they had been rescued, and the measure of their gladness and self-devotion was in proportion to this feeling.

Nor were Churches and services the only fruits of a return from idolatry to the worship of the true God. It was thought then that civilization and sanctity were sisters, and ought to go hand in hand, and the great thirst of those who advocated Christianity was for more schools, more books, and improvements of all kinds. We read of one monk who received intimation, through a dream, that the ploughs in Scotland were not rightly managed ; this took him to Scotland, firmly impressed with the idea that it was the Divine Will that an improved method of driving them was to form a part of his instruction to the people there. Other accounts hint at improvements in the management of land introduced by the clergy, and at discoveries made by them in the many useful arts which are now so familiar to us. To teach the ecclesiastical chant was the cause

^d This see was afterwards removed to Thetford, and then to Norwich, which is still the Cathedral town of the diocese.

of John "the Singer's" mission to England; and so zealous was he, Stephen,* and others, in its cultivation, that soon after Charlemagne made application to England, in preference to any other quarter, for some one to instruct his clergy in music. Indeed, the "bettering of the condition of the people," as we should now term it, seems to have had its due importance in the minds, not only of the clergy, but of the best of their kings, and Sigebert's whole reign was conducted on these principles; some even ascribe to him the first beginning of a school for learning at Cambridge, but this is not authenticated. His love of knowledge, and his having established many other schools in different parts of his kingdom, are, however, unquestionable facts.

After reigning prosperously for some time, he retired from his throne into the monastery of Congresbury, which was his own foundation. But in dying thus to the world, and to the objects of worldly ambition, he did not die to fame; his people remembered him affectionately, nor were his former courage and powers as a leader forgotten; and being obliged to meet king Penda in battle, and having no confidence in Egfrid, who had been appointed Sigebert's successor, nothing would satisfy them but to drag Sigebert from his retreat, and place him at their head: he refused to put off his monastic habit, or to carry any arms but a white wand, as unsuitable to the holy vows he had taken, and

* "From that time also they began, in all the Churches of the English, to learn sacred music, which till then had been known only in Kent; and excepting James above mentioned, [this James was 'James the Deacon.' See Hist. of Northumberland.] the first singing master in the Churches of the Northumbrians was Eddi, surnamed Stephen, invited from Kent by the most reverend Wilfrid." Bede vol. I. b. iv. c. 2. "The choral song was introduced into England, [Kent?] by St. Augustine, as 'John the Deacon' relates." *Mores Catholici*, p. 55.

becoming thus a mark to the enemy, he was slain on the field of battle. When the greater part of the kingdom of East Anglia had received the truth, Felix retired to Dunwich, where, in the performance of his episcopal duties, he ended his valued life. Fursey, his fellow-labourer, obtained from Sigebert the grant of a beautiful tract of land surrounded by woods, near the coast, called Burgh Castle, on which he reared a noble monastery, within the area of the castle, residing there for a while, and then crossing to France, he died in that country.

The next king was the religious Anna,¹ a man famed for the holiness of his children,² all of whom, sooner or later, took religious vows; and the names of two, St. Audrey and St. Erkenwald, are yet remembered in our villages. During Anna's reign, Cenwalch, king of Wessex, sought a refuge from his enemies at the court of the East Anglian king, where he remained three years, and was, by this means, brought to a knowledge of the faith, and persuaded to receive Christian baptism. Anna afterwards assisted him to recover his kingdom from Penda, but this drawing on that good king the dislike of the tyrant, he too became his victim, being constrained to meet him in a battle from which he never returned; and with him all interest, as con-

¹ King Anna was of eminent justice, making himself equal to his servants through humility, lowly to priests, grateful to the people, the father of orphans, the judge of widows, and the brave defender of his country." * * * His wife, "Hereswetha, who was the sister to St. Hilda, shone in the glory of sanctity." *Mores Catholici*, b. vi. p. 56.

² The names of his daughters are as follows:—Etheldrida, or St. Audrey, abbess of Ely; she was for some years wife to Egfrid, king of Northumbria. Sexburga, who was for some years wife to Ercombert, king of Kent, and succeeded her sister as abbess of Ely; Ethelburga, abbess of Brie; Sethrida, an abbess of Ely; Milberga and Wilberga, nuns of Ely. His son St. Erkenwald succeeded Cedde in the bishopric of London, and was remarkable for his piety; in memory of which the last day of April was, for many years, kept as a festival, under the title of St. Erkenwald's holiday.

nected with the kingdom of East Anglia, seems to die, the murder of the last king, Ethelbert, by Offa, reducing it to a state of vassalage to the conquering province.

THE KINGDOM OF MERCIA.

KING Penda, who has been so often mentioned, in connection too with such disastrous events, was the first prince of any note in Mercia, which province it is now our turn to enquire about. It appears to have been for many years tributary to Ethelbert of Kent, and one of the acts of his power was to prevent Penda, who was the true heir to Crida, founder of the kingdom, from ascending the throne, on which he placed Wibba. When Wibba died, Penda was fifty years of age, and Ethelbert being no longer alive to thwart his accession, he soon shewed how much reason that prince had in opposing it at an earlier period. In disposition he was wild, cruel, sanguinary and restless, his encroachments on the neighbouring states were incessant, and no less than four kings, Edwin, Oswald, Sigebert of East Anglia, and Ecgric, were the victims of his ambition, all falling in battles, into which they were hurried in the defence of their subjects, and against their own wishes. The death of king Anna is also laid to his account, but with less justice, since Anna had taken up arms against Penda, in defence of Cenwalch of Wessex, who had certainly treated Penda very badly, having married his sister, and afterwards divorced her ; which circumstance may be adduced in palliation of Penda's aggressions in Wessex, and Anna's hapless fate.

Penda continued a pagan to his latest hour, but with an inconsistency which is not altogether singular, he was willing to promote the cause of Christianity in his realm ; perhaps his heart secretly acknowledged the surpassing loveliness of its holy principles, and their effect on the life and manners, or he might have had a little of the cunning of modern times in him, and thought a good superstition amongst his people, his best protection against treachery, and the only real safeguard of their morals, and that Christianity was as good a creed for this purpose as any other, or he may have determined to repent and embrace the faith at some distant time, when he should have no more objects of ambition to engross his care, and when the sacrifice of his favourite schemes could no longer be required, as the condition of his reconciliation to the Church ; be this as it may, he died, as he had lived, a pagan. But it is related of him, that he held those of his people most in contempt who professed the true faith, yet lived as heathens, so that he was no hypocrite, a character now becoming common among the reclaimed Saxons. One of his acts of sovereignty was to partition off Leicester for his eldest son, the young and handsome Peada, and to send him to Oswy's court, for the purpose of asking his daughter Aflède in marriage. When he arrived there, he was told that a change of religion was the condition of granting his suit ; Aflède could not be bestowed on a pagan. The young prince, on inquiring what he was to believe, and examining into it, was so struck with wonder and delight, and the force and beauty of truth came so powerfully before him, that he declared himself resolved to be a Christian, whether

Affede were granted to him or not. Historians report Alfred of Northumberland to have been the principal agent in his conversion, for Alfred was Penda's brother-in-law, having married his sister Cyneburg, and therefore was naturally interested in all concerning him. At his suggestion, Peada took four priests home to his father's court, one of whom, the holy St. Chad, was subsequently removed to Essex, but he returned to Mercia again after that re-consecration by Theodore, to which I have before alluded, being appointed bishop of Litchfield, in the Cathedral Church of which see he was buried.

You will remember how reluctant Oswy was to fight Penda, and how his prayers were granted, and Penda, the hated and feared in all the surrounding provinces, was at last removed, by death, from the power of doing any more mischief; this happened in the year A.D. 655, and gave Oswy the sovereignty of Mercia, dethroning the young Peada, who would have lost his crown altogether had not his father-in-law treated him with great consideration, and ceded to him a large portion of his hereditary dominions, which he did not long live to enjoy, for he was murdered the Easter following his father's death, some say at the instigation of the very princess whose alliance had led to his conversion. And this is another proof, if more were wanting, how sadly these early annals are chequered, and their brightness marred, by deeds of horror; virtues and vices, each striking in their degree, alternating with one another like the shifting tints of a kaleidoscope. Still we must keep in mind that as there were as yet but few fixed laws, and those often difficult to carry out, might with many constituted right, and the temptation to sin was in

proportion to the ease and impunity with which it could be committed.

Peada's death left Oswy sole king of Mercia, which province he retained possession of only three years, the people having secreted a prince of the blood royal, named Wolfhere, until they were strong enough to revolt, when they unanimously crowned him, and threw off the yoke of their conqueror. There is a story going of Wolfhere's having put to death two of his sons, because they were Christians; I do not know if it is worthy of credit, but, at any rate, he was not long a heathen, and when converted was very zealous in the cause of truth, justice, and right. During his reign of seventeen years, peace and prosperity flourished, not only in his own, but in many of the surrounding states, and the gentle influences of religion seemed for awhile to hold the storms of passion in abeyance, spanning the land like the blue heaven of a summer day. Wolfhere's wife also came of a good stock, she was the daughter of Ercombert of Kent, and he had, by her, a holy child called Vereburga, who was afterwards esteemed a saint. There can be no doubt that he was a powerful prince, for the kingdoms of the East and South Saxons were his tributaries, and he managed these states much after his own fashion, dethroning Adelwalch, the king of the latter province, and appointing him the Isle of Wight for a residence.

Next after Wolfhere, Ethelred reigned over Mercia, supplanting Cenred, the rightful heir; Ethelred was Wolfhere's brother; some call him a religious prince, but his motives appear to me to be of so mixed a character, and his life so inconsistent with a true mora-

lity, that I have little hesitation in saying that he was only religious in the sense of countenancing the Church, and keeping well with the clergy for ends of his own. It was now that a profession of Christianity began to be popular, since it was at length the generally prevailing faith throughout the country; and when Ethelred struggled to divide the diocese of Litchfield into five distinct bishoprics^b (a design which he carried through in the face of every obstacle, reasonable or unreasonable), it was more, I think, to advance the importance of his own kingdom, than from any ardent zeal for the Church. During an expedition which he undertook against Lothaire of Kent, he shewed his indifference to holy things, by allowing his soldiers to commit the most dreadful ravages; Churches and monasteries were not excepted from the general pillage, and Rochester, with its Cathedral, became a heap of ruins. Ethelred's reign lasted thirty years; a very long time, if we consider the uncertainty of power among states lying, like those belonging to the Heptarchy, near each other, ever ready for an outbreak; and whose very existence seemed to depend on a continued effort to preserve inviolate ill-defined boundaries and recently-acquired possessions. Ethelred was one of the princes who took a part against bishop Wilfrid, who has been spoken of elsewhere.

Theodore was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest men of his age, learned, zealous, and strict in maintaining the discipline of the Church, and of enlarged and comprehensive views as regarded the general welfare of the people. He had a mind capable of conceiving great

^b This division was made A.D. 680. The new dioceses were Leicester, or Legecestria, Worcester, Sidnacester, and Dorchester.

designs, and energy sufficient to execute them. Yet he fell into a snare, often woven for such minds, he saw what ought to be done, and he did it with a high hand. It was right that a diocese large as Wilfrid's should be divided ; but Theodore, in doing it, broke the rules of the Church, and brought in confusion instead of peace. And so his own work was broken in pieces before it was accomplished. He had, in extreme old age, to repent of his injustice to Wilfrid, else it is said of him " the English Churches received more advantage during the time of his pontificate than ever they had before." In the synod of Heathfield he guarded, in England, the faith against a heresy then harassing the east ; the council at Rome was deferred for a while in the hopes of his coming. In his wish to enlighten the people, and spread the love of literature amongst them, he went so far as actually to lead, for a time, the life of a learned professor, in one of the schools he had founded ; this was at Creglade, twenty miles from Oxford. In the Church of Canterbury too he, together with Hadrian, taught both in the books of holy writ, and eccleastical poetry, astronomy, arithmetic, with Greek and Latin, as a mother tongue.

When Ethelred, and Egfrid, of Northumberland, were living in constant warfare and jealousy of one another, Theodore was successful in making peace between them, and, afterwards, when Theodore had been reconciled to Wilfrid, and repented his treatment of him, he was able to persuade Ethelred to receive him back into favour. These are a few, out of many, evidences that exist of his extraordinary power in subduing all to his own opinion. He was a foreigner by

extraction, being a native of Tarsus, in Cilicia, who, happening to stay at Rome when there was some difficulty in selecting a metropolitan for Canterbury, was, for his learning and general character, chosen by pope Vitalian, and consecrated to this important see A.D. 668. He continued in it for twenty-two years.

To return to Ethelred, his last act was to vacate his throne, and take monastic vows in the monastery of Bardney; his nephew Cenred, whose claim he had, hitherto, set aside, being his successor. Among the crimes laid to his charge is the serious one of having been concerned in the murder of his wife Ostrith, but we may hope, as this account is not very trustworthy, that it is also untrue. Cenred reigned four years, and then joined Offa, of Essex, as before mentioned, in his journey to Rome, Ceolred, Ethelred's son, succeeding to the crown of Mercia. I shall pass over his reign, merely mentioning his profligacy and utter disregard of the precepts of religion, which caused his dying moments to be full of agony and horror.

Then came Ethelbald, whom Ceolred had persecuted because he was heir to the throne, and who, when his troubles were over, founded the monastery of Croyland, in the same marsh where St. Guthlac, a remarkable recluse of those days, who had chosen this singular place as his residence, prophesied his future prosperous reign. So watery and unpromising was this region, afterwards beautiful and well wooded, that it was necessary to drive piles of timber into the marsh as a foundation to the building, which was of stone; a material sufficiently uncommon, in the structures of that period, to justify its being recorded in history.

Ethelbald, however, soon lapsed from his more serious profession into open crime, but was eventually reclaimed from grosser sins through a long letter sent to him by Boniface, archbishop of Mentz, which contained much valuable teaching on many points; and which is, in the boldness of its style and its severe rebukes on sin, a standing proof of the worth of that prelate, and his unflinching probity. Boniface was an Englishman, and had been educated for a Benedictine monk in this country, from whence he travelled into West Friesland and elsewhere, but was sent back to Mentz by Gregory II. A.D. 723. There he crowned a life of spotless holiness and of unwearied labours by a martyr's death, for he was murdered by the pagans in 754.

Ethelbald was one of the Saxon princes who claimed and acquired the rank of Bretwalda, which was awarded to him when Ina, of Wessex, resigned his crown. In this position he is said to have pushed his prerogative too far, and incurred the dislike of the surrounding princes, one of whom, Beornred, assassinated him, and then tried to ascend the throne; but in this he did not succeed, for he was opposed by the celebrated Offa, Ethelbald's nephew, the most remarkable of the Mercian kings.

Offa had not been long on the throne when the old British race, who had remained in subjection so many years, strove again to regain a footing on the Saxon side of the boundary. They chose for the occasion of their attempt the very time when Offa was at war with Kent, Northumbria, and Wessex, and they gained a few unimportant victories over the Mercians, who were nearest to the border. But Offa soon turned his whole

army in the direction of Wales, making a hurried peace with his former foes ; and he never flagged in his exertions until he had not only driven the Britons quite out of his own territory, but had conquered and seized a part of theirs, which he settled with Saxon families. For the protection of these, he threw up a large dyke or rampart, the remains of which still bear his name, and they may still be traced, in a northern direction, from Hereford into Montgomeryshire.¹ “Offa’s dyke” also passes through parts of Denbighshire and Flintshire. Many other victories are ascribed to his prowess, and he was doubtless one of the first men of his day. He corresponded with the great Charlemagne, and was the means of sending Alcuin^k to his court, to assist in promoting civilization on the continent ; for England was now in a position to take the lead in this matter, so numerous were her schools, in which many important branches of education were understood and taught. Besides this Offa collected and enrolled a body of laws, under the title of the “*Mercens Seaga*,” and, although the same thing had been already done in a neighbouring state, it must be considered a proof that Offa added an enlightened mind to his other qualities, while it remains doubtful, at the same time, how far these qualities gave him any title to be considered a good man.

¹ Called “Clawd Offa.”

^k Alcuin taught Greek, Latin, Hebrew, logic, rhetoric, astronomy, and mathematics. He founded the University of Paris, and disposed the pope to found a similar institution at Pavia. He sent for some of his scholars from England, to assist him in the instruction of the French nobility, and in the cultivation of Church music ; among those who went over to him was the celebrated Johannes Scotus. See Coll. vol. i. p. 343. “Charlemagne was passionately fond of the ecclesiastical chant. . . . In A.D. 747, in the Council of Clovesho, there were decrees for its especial cultivation.” *Mores Catholici*, vol. i. p. 559. Also see the twelfth canon of the above Council, as quoted by Collier, vol. i. p. 304.

As in the case of many of his predecessors, one dark crime casts its shadow across the whole of a career which might otherwise be deemed a brilliant one ; and it is a crime which checks any attempt at palliation. The young Ethelbert, king of East Anglia, arriving at Offa's court, for the purpose of seeking his alliance by marriage, because he wished to judge for himself of his intended bride, rather than to send (as was then the custom) a formal mission to demand her, was, by Offa, treacherously murdered, after being received, in the first instance, with great hospitality and kindness. In an evil hour his wicked wife suggested to him what a fine opportunity this was for possessing himself of East Anglia, and, yielding to her persuasions, the assassin's knife was commissioned to remove the only obstacle to the success of his ambitious dream.¹ Thus fell Ethelbert, in the dawn of a promising manhood ; and no sooner had his murderer been made aware of his end, than, like Ahab,^m he set out immediately to secure for himself the coveted territory. But his punishment was milder than Ahab's, and his repentance more lasting ; and when East Anglia had been joined to Mercia, Offa was a miserable man. Was it by this that he had blindly hoped to appease the pangs of conscience ? If he had, he was soon dispossessed of such an illusive idea. It is thought that he never had a happy moment from the hour when his crime was accomplished unless peace

¹ Etheldritha or Eldrida, Offa's daughter, was in no degree accessory to this crime, but tried to save Ethelbert from the snare. She afterwards became a nun, retiring to a "cell in the northern part of the Church of Croyland," where "she was enabled, more than thirty years after her sad betrothal, to offer a sanctuary to a successor of her father, Wichtlaff, king of Mercia, when he fled from Egbert king of Wessex." See Maitland's "Dark Ages," p. 241.

^m 1 Kings xxi.

was restored at the last through the deep repentance of his brief remaining life. What is recorded of his conduct afterwards, gives good reason to hope that he was a true penitent. He is reported to have shut up his guilty wife, nor would he live with her again, and he spent the remainder of his own life in acts of devotion. It is true that these and his liberality to the Church have been sneered at, as if they proved that Offa thought money could compensate for crime, or the giving up of this world's perishable pleasures blot out the imperishable past; but such is a very narrow-minded way of viewing the subject; and while we are ready to acknowledge that sin cannot be atoned for by man, let us not forget, as we too often do, that the only test of real repentance is full restitution, so far as we are able to make it. Viewing Offa's character under the force of this reasoning, we shall not judge it hardly, but rejoice that the soil of his heart, softened by the tears of compunction, ripened, before it was too late, the rich fruits of pious gifts and sacrifices. They were all he had to offer to Heaven as proofs of his sorrow; they could not raise Ethelbert from his cold grave, but they could benefit the living, and, through their prayers, bless the penitent king. I am the more careful to dwell on this distinction because we have, of late years, been accustomed to a very different style of reasoning, as false and uncharitable to the memory of the departed as it is opposed to those hopes of Divine mercy which, in other cases, we are so jealous in claiming for ourselves, under circumstances of a far more doubtful character. On the whole, then, I think that, to be just *and impartial*, we ought to divide Offa's reign into two

parts ; a career of unbridled licentiousness, wild ambitious projects, ungoverned passions, and brilliant successes, followed by a few years of deep humility, bitter repentance, and sincere reformation. We cannot call him a good king, for he was overbearing and tyrannical ; but he was, at the same time, enlightened and judicious beyond the age he lived in, of which he left substantial evidence, in the improved state of his kingdom. And when we remember that his last years, for he did not long outlive the murder of Ethelbert, were a confession of the errors of his ill-spent youth, we shall be led to deal gently with his memory, not overlooking the strength of his temptations, nor forgetting our own weakness and sin, notwithstanding all the restraints and checks that religion and the laws of society now impose upon every one.

Among Offa's pious deeds, we may enumerate the building of a splendid Church at Hereford, on the spot where Ethelbert had been murdered ; the disinterring of the bones of St. Alban, and the rearing of the noble abbey, which bears his name, over the relics of the martyr ; also the endowment of the English college, established by king Ina, at Rome, with " Peter's pence," which was a tax of one penny per family, demanded once a year, from every household possessing lands of a certain value within the twenty-three counties over which Offa was king. This rent was called " Peter's pence," because it was collected on the first of August, then named " St. Peter's ad vincula," on which day St. Alban's relics had been discovered. Since then, this tax has been confounded with another, which was

granted towards the wax lights burned in St. Peter's at Rome, and for the maintenance of the poor of that city, and it has been spoken of as an extortion on the part of the Roman pontiff; but whatever quarrels may have arisen as to the pope's right to claim the amount, or as to the purposes to which it was afterwards applied, the endowment in question was, in point of fact, given, in the first instance, to an English establishment, for the benefit of English youths sent to Rome to be educated, or of English children residing with their parents in that city. Another of Offa's regulations for the Church is far more questionable : it was the erecting of Litchfield into a metropolitan see, thus making the kingdom of Mercia independent of the archbishop of Canterbury. Of course Lambert, then archbishop, and many, both of the clergy and laity, were strongly opposed to the measure, which, besides that it encroached upon the jurisdiction and rights of the see of Canterbury, was likewise a breach of the regulations left by St. Augustine to the Saxon Church,—regulations still revered and considered binding on the Church, notwithstanding that they had been frequently disallowed and infringed upon during the shifting governments of the Heptarchy, or when the union of will and power in some one or other interested individual, combined to render them useless. They were thus often nugatory, but had not been really abrogated. Nevertheless, Offa's scheme proved successful, for he gained pope Adrian's consent to the new arrangement, and few, in those days, dared to disobey the pope's decision, however they might dislike or disapprove of it ; but after a

lapse of sixteen years the see of Litchfield was again reduced to a bishopric only, and things returned to their former footing.^m

I have mentioned a daughter of Offa's already, and with honour; he had another, called Edburga, remarkable also, not for piety, but for profligacy. She is necessarily introduced into history as causing the death of her husband Brithric, king of Wessex, by poison, but which poison she had intended for one of the nobles, and not for him. It was this family connexion which induced Offa to refuse hospitality to the young Egbert, when he sought a refuge at his court; Offa feared to offend his son-in-law, Brithric, whose jealousy of Egbert, on account of his royal descent, made Wessex scarcely a safe residence for him. Egbert, on being warned away from Mercia, crossed the water, and remained for twelve years a guest in the court of the celebrated Charlemagne. He is the same prince who afterwards united the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy into one.

Offa was succeeded in the government of Mercia by

^m Of this Collier gives the following account:—"Kenulphus, being resolved to do right to the see of Canterbury, and procure the enlargement of that province to its ancient extent, wrote to pope Leo III. for his concurrence and approbation. Athelard, archbishop of Canterbury, going to Rome about this time, to solicit the interest of his see, might possibly carry the king's letter. It is couched in terms of great ceremony and religious submission, and runs to this purpose:—"The king promises to be governed by the pope's decision, and to execute his orders to the utmost of his power; he desires his holiness would adopt him for his son, and engages his affection and duty shall always answer up to that relation." After this strain of respect, he puts the pope in mind that king Offa, out of disaffection to archbishop Lambert and the court of Kent, endeavoured to canton out the province, and maim the privileges of that see. That the late pope, Adrian, at the instance of the Mercian king above mentioned, ventured upon an unprecedented stretch of authority, broke in upon the settlement of pope Gregory the Great, and raised the see of Litchfield to an archbishopric. He desires the pope would return him and the English bishops a favourable answer; that the case may be thoroughly considered; that justice may be done, and such measures laid down as may prevent the island from running into a schism And thus, at the instance of king Kenulphus, Leo reversed the order of his predecessor Adrian, extinguished the archiepiscopal character at Litchfield, and made that bishop suffragan to Canterbury, as formerly." Vol. i. p. 338.

his son Ecfrith, who reigned a few months only ; and then came king Kenulph, a prince renowned both for courage and piety.^a But one event of his reign seems unfavourable to this statement—his alleged barbarity to Edbert Pren, king of Kent, which country he found it necessary to invade, in consequence of a long-existing quarrel between that kingdom and Mercia. Kenulph is said to have cut off Edbert Pren's hands and put out his eyes. That the unhappy king was so maimed there is no doubt, but I would fain hope not by his orders. I have seen an account of this cruel treatment, which ascribes it to his own treacherous and probably irritated subjects.^o He was afterwards kindly received by Kenulph, and set at liberty, but not restored to his kingdom. From this period, the history of Mercia is unimportant, for the country was disturbed by fierce internal warfare, arising from the determination of the East Anglians to throw off their yoke of allegiance, and return to their former independence. Egbert took advantage of these disorders to annex the whole kingdom to Wessex. The way in which he carried out his design will be told elsewhere.

^a See Collier's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. I. p. 337.

^o "Cynewulf [Kenulph] resolved to gain possession of the country, which he attacked with a powerful army. Eadbert Pren could not make any defence: the "men of the marsh," or "Merscwara," supposed to be the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Romney, betrayed him into the power of his enemies. Eadbert is accused of great tyranny; but he was treated with a degree of cruelty which no tyranny could justify. The "Merscwara" put out his eyes, and struck off his hands, and, thus blinded and maimed, the agonised captive was loaded with chains and fetters, and conducted into Mercia." From Sir Edward Palgrave's *Anglo-Saxon Hist.* "See *Saxon Chronicle*, an. 796. Simeon of Durham, an. 798, makes it the act of Kenulph."

LECTURE IX.

THE KINGDOM OF SUSSEX.

BEFORE I begin another lecture, it may not be amiss to say something of the great man whose energetic qualities make such a figure in the histories of this period, and through whose exertions the whole of Europe did, in a measure, experience a fresh impulse onwards towards civilization ; I mean the celebrated Charlemagne. He is connected especially with us, because he derived the means of bringing about this great change principally from the valuable assistance of Alcuin, Scotus, Erigena and others ; all ecclesiastics whose minds had been formed in our English schools, and who, besides the renown which their learning so justly earned, left also behind them the memory of a holiness of life and manners which shed a rich lustre on their other attainments. Charlemagne knew how to estimate such men, and that is no small praise to him ; if we cannot follow the saints in their self-renunciation, it is, at least, something, to be influenced by them in lesser matters, to own, to harbour, to countenance, to revere them. Charlemagne did all this ; he had an enlarged and comprehensive mind, readily appreciating whatever was high, noble, or worthy of imitation ; his whole system of governing shewed the liberality and scope of his views, to which he added a wonderful

prudence and sagacity in carrying them out. As an emperor he can scarcely be admired too much ; on his moral character it is difficult to pronounce, one story of a wholesale massacre, by his order, of four thousand five hundred Saxon prisoners, standing in painful contrast to his other virtues ; and besides this fact, there is more of the warrior than the Christian in what we elsewhere read of his forcing whole provinces to receive the sacrament of baptism at the point of the sword.

His schools have been mentioned ; some of his laws and regulations are also worth our notice, as probably formed from our own. For example, he created a class of men called commissaries or superintendents, and these persons were sent, every three months, to the different provinces, to examine into the manner in which the dukes who governed them maintained the laws and executed justice. These commissaries listened to all complaints, and redressed grievances. It was common at that time for persons who were pursued to take refuge from their pursuers in Churches, and so sacred were Churches held, that, if they succeeded in reaching one, it was considered a privileged asylum, and they were accounted safe while within the holy building. But this privilege had been abused, robbers and murderers taking advantage of it to shelter themselves from the punishment justly due to their crimes. It was another of Charlemagne's regulations to put an end to this abuse. He likewise made some changes in the manner of ordering the sittings of the great courts which his father Pepin had established ; and he put a stop to the custom of begging among those able to work, created a fleet for the protection of the coast from pirates, and

enacted numerous other wise regulations. In short his activity both of mind and body were wonderful, his palace was no less well ordered than his kingdom, being remarkable for the economy and simplicity of its arrangements, and he may be truly called a great man. It is necessary now, however, to give a short glance at the earlier history of Sussex before we go on to the union of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under the prince, who, by spending twelve years in the court of the emperor Charlemagne, gained those habits and acquired that knowledge, which fitted him to conduct so high an enterprize to a prosperous termination.

The kingdom of the South Saxons was always inconsiderable, being but fifty miles long by forty broad; it was conquered by Ella about A.D. 491. This Ella had a son who succeeded him in the government, and was remarkable for reigning seventy-six years; little besides is known of him, save that he left his name to the capital city of the South Saxons, which was called Cissan-cester, and is now Chichester. Upon his death, in the year A.D. 590, the kingdom became tributary to Wessex, until Adelwalch was elected king over it, when Penda's invasion of Wessex gave the South Saxons the opportunity to revolt with impunity. On Cenwalch's return to his own kingdom he found the recovery of Sussex beyond his power, and it does not appear that he attempted it then. But in the reign of Wulfhere, things must have been on their old footing, for that king assumed the right of dethroning Adelwalch, to whom he allotted the Isle of Wight for a residence, limiting his dominion to that small territory. In the year A.D. 686, Adelwalch was a second time at large, which

is proved by the fact of his receiving Wilfrid, then a houseless wanderer, at the court of the South Saxons.

Was this act of hospitality unrewarded? Wilfrid, with the love of souls uppermost in his heart, knew how to employ the time of his exile in promoting the happiness of his fellow-creatures; he became the honoured instrument of that country's conversion. The way in which he set about this task, is another among the instances already recorded that these early teachers did not undervalue such human means as lay within their reach; they gained the hearts of the people first, and converted them afterwards. Wilfrid began his ministry among the South Saxons by teaching them to fish, an art they were till then wholly ignorant of. If, as some say, his former habits were luxurious, what a changed life must this have been to him! More striking still was the change in the people in whose welfare he took such an interest.

Relieved by their new employment from the pressure of want, under which they had long been sufferers, and seeing a three years drought suddenly removed, and an abundance of rain sent down on the parched and thirsty soil, they began to reflect whether these blessings might not, as well the one as the other, have some connexion with the presence among them of a holy and Heaven-favoured being. Yet we cannot think that prosperity alone made them fix upon Wilfrid as their benefactor; they must have seen more in him than mere skill in fishing, and had he been an ordinary person they would hardly have concluded that the rain fell in obedience to his wishes; Wilfrid must have been a man of meekness and prayer, whatever his enemies say of him; how else

could he have fallen so naturally into the simple occupation of a fisherman?

King Adelwalch sanctioned all his efforts to convert his subjects, and afterwards gave him a see, at Selsey, in the duties of which he spent five years. Adelwalch being defeated and slain by Ceadwalla, or Cadwallader, Sussex was again altogether a dependent state, and from thenceforth wholly annexed to Wessex.

THE KINGDOM OF WESSEX.

AND now Wessex claims our attention; but powerful as that state became, as its later history shews, the lives and reigns of its first kings are involved in obscurity. Nothing indeed, in the way of incident, seems left us connected with their home-life and feelings, to give the stamp of character to their actions, or to enable us, even with hundreds of years intervening, to think of them as "men of like passions with ourselves," swayed towards high deeds, or sinking into sin according as good or evil was by them fostered or opposed. It is wonderful how much the merest trifles, taken in this light, become valuable to the historian; without them history is little more than a narrative of struggles and crimes, the causes of which are, in a manner, buried with the actors in them. And so it is with Wessex, notwithstanding its great importance as a kingdom, which made it powerful enough to swallow up and absorb all the remaining states of the Heptarchy into its own greatness; its history is a mere succession of dry details, with scarcely a

trace of individuality in any of its kings but Ina and Egbert, or a trait of domestic manners extant upon its surface, unless we except the story of the pigs, which king Ina's queen caused to be turned into his room after a banquet, in order to persuade her husband that earthly pleasures were fleeting and ended in vanity and disgust. Modern historians might not be found simple enough to learn the intended lesson, and certainly it would never occur to queens of the present day to call in such an argument to enforce it.

But to return to the first founding of the kingdom of Wessex. We have already seen that Cerdic took possession of the coast of Hampshire in Arthur's time, and was crowned at Winchester; he was a pagan in deed as well as in belief, for he destroyed a monastery there, to [] it into a pagan temple. His son Cenric succeeded killing all the monks, and turning the Church attached him. Ceaulin is the next remarkable king, because he is ranked among the Bretwaldas, but he did not long remain one, being deprived of the honour by the consent of the other princes of the Heptarchy, who awarded it to Ethelbert of Kent. It then became vested in Edwin of Northumbria, and was perhaps the cause of Cuichelm's jealousy of that monarch, and his attempt to assassinate him; which base stratagem is the only trait recorded of this Cuichelm. Kingil, or Kynegil, inherited the crown of Wessex about A.D. 611, and was contemporary with Oswald, who is reported to have converted him to Christianity: Oswald had married Kingil's daughter. But Collier gives the praise of this conversion, perhaps more justly, to Birinus, afterwards bishop of Dorchester, a foreign prelate, whose

love of souls made him beg hard for an employment which should take him amongst the pagans ; he was, therefore, consecrated at Rome expressly for the office of a missionary bishop, and sent to England, to reclaim the Saxons in Wessex. At his death many of the districts, in which, through his efforts, and the Divine blessing on them, the faith seemed to be already rooted and established, relapsed into partial darkness ; this might be owing to the disturbed state of things caused by Penda's invasion of the country about this time. Nor was Cenwalch, who had succeeded Kingil, a Christian, until, during his banishment, king Anna prevailed on him, as we have already heard, to be baptized. Penda kept dominion over Wessex for three years, leaving the harassed people little time for entering on the quiet virtues of their new profession ; indeed, we have strong reasons for believing that the profession of Christianity did not become general through the whole state until Ceadwalla lent his influence to promote the good cause.

Oswald was still reigning in Northumberland when Ceadwalla mounted the throne of Wessex. He was a prince of some character. For the two first years after his accession he seemed to think of nothing but war ; at the end of that time he resigned his crown, gave up his rank, and setting out for Rome, was baptized there on Easter eve, and falling sick the same day, died in his baptismal robe.

So much is said of the baptismal habit, or robe, in early history, that it may be well to describe it. Among the first British Christians, baptisms were usually celebrated at Easter and Whitsuntide, and the catechumens,

or those who had been prepared for baptism by such previous instruction as was considered necessary, were, on the day on which they were to enter upon their new and solemn obligations, clothed in white, that colour being the emblem of innocence and purity. In this custom the British Church followed the primitive Christians. Thus the army in Wales were probably all in white at the time of the Hallelujah battle, for, if you recollect, Bede says they were actually "dripping with the waters of baptism" when the foe came upon them. If so, this striking costume must have added to the panic their shouting occasioned among the Saxon soldiers; they must have looked more like an army of spirits than of men, and their unfitness to fight may have been, under Heaven, the means of their deliverance.

Imagine the splendour of such an Easter festival in the days of the Anglo-Saxons, when hundreds, so clothed, were assembled together in one of our beautiful English vallies with the buds of spring (a type of the revival from spiritual death and the "birth unto righteousness,") bursting into glory around them; or might not such a sight at Whitsuntide, under the calm blue of a midsummer sky, the emblem of "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," be one even angels would stoop from their "golden thrones" to gaze upon with joy?

To return to king Ceadwalla. From hearing of his baptism at this time, as well as from his former ambition and recklessness, we may conclude that, however he may have respected Christianity in others, he did not himself believe in it. When at war with the South Saxons, he vowed the fourth part of his conquest

to the Church in case of success ; this vow he scrupulously performed, making over the Isle of Wight to bishop Wilfrid who was then in the neighbourhood, and through whose exertions its inhabitants were speedily reclaimed from error and led to embrace the truth. There is little more to say of Ceadwalla. His victories during his short career were, it is true, numerous, but they were unimportant, and more like "border frays" than regular disciplined warfare ; rather ravages than conquests. This was the case especially in Kent, where his brother Mollo, who had entered it with an army, met with an untimely fate ; which fate Cadwalader, according to the common view of those lawless times, made it a part of his religion to revenge, and he never rested until he had devastated and destroyed the whole of that fertile country. At his death the famous king Ina mounted the throne. He began his reign in the year A.D, 689, and was Bretwalda, in the honours of which title Offa succeeded him. Like the Mercian king, he made laws, built Churches and schools, and acted in an enlightened and prudent manner in all matters connected with religion and government. At this time Mercia and Wessex were rival states, each claiming to be the most powerful province. Offa's career, then, although mentioned first in the order of history, was more like an imitation of Ina's, a repeating in Mercia of such enactments as Ina had made previously in Wessex, than an independent effort of his own genius, or the result of his own discrimination in the art of governing. I have already spoken of Ina's school at Rome ; it was endowed by him with a penny rent, collected once a year from every family in Wessex, after

the same fashion as Offa's subsequent tax of "Peter's pence." Like most of the Bretwaldas Ina was brave, and as he knew how to maintain the internal strength and prosperity of his kingdom by his wise and prudent regulations, his reign was prosperous. Against the Britons he had to wage constant warfare, and it was in one of these expeditions that he visited Glassenbury, which led to his after restoration of that noble monastery on a truly magnificent scale, and he granted a revenue to the establishment by charter. This charter is still in existence, and claims to be one of the oldest documents of the kind in this country.* He was also very merciful to his conquered subjects, particularly those on the borders; he did all he could to overcome their prejudices and encourage them to settle and intermarry with his own people. After a reign of thirty-seven years, he resigned his sceptre, in order to take religious vows,

* I here subjoin a specimen of one of the early charters, taken from the "book of S. Chad," supposed to be written before the year 720; extracted from Mr. Williams, "The Cymry."—"Teilo, witness; Turgint, witness; Cinhilin, witness; Sps, witness; and all the family of Teilo; of the laity, Numin, son of Aidan, witness; Signou, son of Jacou, witness; Berthutis, witness; Cinda, witness. Whoever will keep it shall be blessed; whoever will break it shall be cursed. This writing sheweth, that Rhys and the family of Grethi, gave to God and S. Teilo, Trevwyddog, which is on the road to the confluence of Cinchi; and its rent payment is forty loaves, and a wether sheep in the summer; and in the winter forty loaves, a hog, and forty dishes of butter. God is witness; Sadwrnwydd, witness; Nywys, witness; Gwrgi, witness; Cwdhwlf, witness; of the laity, Cynwern, witness; Collwyn, witness; Cyhorged, witness; Erbin, witness; Hwrodd, witness. Whoever will keep it shall be blessed; whoever will break it shall be cursed." The following, from "Liber Landavensis," describes a restitution made for the violation of a sanctuary:—"Meredydd, son of Rhun, king of the region of Dyved, being excited by excessive rage and cruelty, killed Guvrir, one of the men of S. Teilo, in the refuge which belonged to God and to him, whilst he was before His altar; due penance being required of him, and pardon granted on account of proposed amendment, in fasting, prayer, and alms-giving, with promised reformation in every respect, he gave to God and S. Teilo, and the Church of Llandaff and all its pastors for ever, the manor of Brunus, with its Church, and fish, and wood, and likewise Telichclouman and Trevcannus; which lands were to be free of all regal service, and with all their dignity, and the privilege of S. Teilo granted in all things, and complete commonage for the inhabitants, in field and in woods, in water and in pastures, for ever, a curse being pronounced on the violators, and a blessing on the preservers."

at Rome, an act to which some say he was influenced by his wife, and the curious anecdote about the pigs is given as a proof that this was the case. But it is easy to imagine that, having borne the pressure and burthen of such an immense kingdom so long, he would willingly resign its glittering but uneasy crown for rest and calm, feelings scarcely to be realised in such troublous times anywhere but in the cloister, and in the exercise of the sacred and peaceful employments of prayer and praise. He did not, like many, shrink from his duties in the vigour of manhood ; he fairly earned his rest. We are told that he entered Rome in disguise, lest his rank should be discovered ; he wished to be quit of it at once and for ever.

I have dwelt longer on his character than I intended, for it has few individual features ; for want of these it can but be guessed at by his actions, but I am inclined to think of king Ina as of a noble and conscientious man, and one who deserves the praise of posterity. After him Cudred or Cuthred claims notice, merely from the fact that he first gave leave to bury within the walls of a city, an indulgence to his people which might have been better withheld from them, and which I only refer to by way of curiosity, as it shews that even then such matters were made the subject of legal enactments ; for civilization now made rapid strides everywhere, and laws are the growth of civilization. Cudred had a general who gained more authority over the people than himself. His successor, Sigebert, famed for his vices, was dethroned, through the abhorrence his conduct had excited. In this miserable state duke Cumbran received and protected him from

his enemies ; but venturing, one day, to counsel him, and gently reprove his excesses, Sigebert rose against his benefactor, and murdered him upon the spot. After this treacherous deed he fled, and, wandering about the woods, was found and slain by a swineherd of the murdered nobleman, who wished to revenge his master's death. Brithric, afterwards king of Wessex, I have before named, as marrying Offa's daughter, and receiving from her a cup of poison. No other king of Wessex is worth the time that would be taken up in telling his history. Brithric was succeeded by Egbert, who speedily became monarch of the whole seven provinces.

LECTURE X.

DURING the last five lectures we have been passing through a period of about two hundred and thirty years. I am taking into this calculation the period from St. Augustine's landing to Egbert's union of the Heptarchy. At the time when Egbert mounted the throne the seven provinces had been reduced to two principal kingdoms, Mercia, and Wessex, the other five having become tributary to these, or being wholly annexed to them. Thus Sussex was joined to Wessex by Cadwalader ; the East Angles to Mercia, under Offa ; Essex, at the death of Selred, who succeeded the other Offa, had become dependent on Mercia, although retaining a nominal king ; Northumberland, from the time of Eadbert, was one continued scene of revolt and murder, prince after prince falling victims to the treachery of the people, or of relatives who pretended to the throne ; and in Kent, if the succession of kings was unbroken, yet, the same anarchy and confusion prevailing as in the other states, the kingdom was, to the last degree, weak and unsettled ; it became first tributary to Mercia, and was easily brought under subjection afterwards by the victorious Egbert.

Of Egbert himself we have heard as an exile, who being driven from his home, by the jealousy of Brithric, found a refuge in the court of the most mighty

monarch of those days, in a country where learning was encouraged and virtue respected. When, therefore, the death of Brithric opened the way for his return to his paternal inheritance, he mounted the throne of his ancestors under the most favourable circumstances, no opposition to his election arising, except from the Mercian king Bernulf, who immediately marched an army against him. This army Egbert defeated, and Bernulf was slain, an event which led speedily to Egbert's possession of the whole seven provinces, for in one or two years more he had, without much fighting, effected the union of all, and it was an union which promised to be lasting.

Leaving him, therefore, for the present, in his high position, it will not be amiss to wind up what we have already learned, by dwelling for a short time on the state of England, the morals of the people, their government, manners, and mode of life.

I described to you the appearance of the country when possessed by the Britons ; it had now undergone a considerable change. You will remember that formerly those who had flocks and herds were in the habit of travelling over the waste lands, seeking pasture for them, and settling wherever the ground was unoccupied. Such flocks were the wealth of the earlier princes of the country. The herds of Caractacus contained twenty-one thousand milch cows, besides other cattle. With these large herds were numerous attendants, who were generally accounted the property of the owner of the cattle ; it was a species of slave-holding, but as these people met with protection and food at their owner's hands, many were tempted to sell their liberty, if in

want or otherwise distressed. But in the time of the union, the different kings and princes had given so many grants of land^a to the Church, to warriors, and to others who had done service to the state, that now England was, in a great measure, divided into estates, the boundaries of which were settled; while those who held these lands took rank according to the size and value of their possessions. Slavery still continued, that is, men were still bought and sold by their masters, but many who had large estates had divided them off into farms, which they let to the most faithful of their servants and adherents, receiving a rent in kind for them, or so many cattle, and so many loaves of bread, &c., yearly, for each farm; thus another class of men had arisen, who were called *ceorles*, or freedmen. These men, besides the rent which they paid, were obliged to come to the aid of their chief, or master, when he sent for them, brawls occurring continually in those disturbed times which the government was not powerful enough to prevent. A prince of the blood was little higher in rank than some of his thanes or earls. An earl was the governor of a county or province. A prince, then, was respected more for his good qualities, valour, character, and judgment, than for his high birth

^a Land was held among the Anglo-Saxons chiefly in two ways: either it belonged to the community, or to individuals. That which was the property of the community was called "*folc-land*," or the land of the people; that which was the property of individuals, was called, as having been conveyed and secured to them by charter, "*boc-land*." The *folc-land* was not necessarily occupied in common, it was probably more generally parcelled out to individuals; but they could not, as in the case of *boc-land*, dispose of it as they pleased, and it reverted to the community at the expiration of the term for which it had been granted. It was also subject to heavy public burdens. *Boc-land* was originally land severed from the common stock, and invested with the privilege of exemption from most public burdens, and of being absolutely the property of the holder and his heirs, instead of reverting to the community.

and station ; if he could not gain authority by these, he was deposed, and treated with contempt. Next to kings, the clergy, who were called mass-priests, or altar-thanes, were most thought of. This is not wonderful, for they were more highly educated than any other class, and when learning and holiness are united, as was so frequently the case among the Anglo-Saxon clergy, it is not easy to limit their influence. But we were speaking of the degrees of rank among the laity : these may be generally divided into three, viz.—1. Thane, or chief ; earls, or ealdormen, also belonging to this class ; 2. Ceorle, or husbandman ; freedmen, who did not rise to the rank of thanes except under peculiar circumstances ; 3. Serf, or villein, the “born slave,” or “thrall,” of his master, belonging to him like his horse or his dog ; but this latter class sometimes became freedmen, when their fidelity or good conduct deserved such a reward. There were laws for protecting the serfs, but not rigid ones.

The affairs of the realm were settled by public assemblies or courts, called wittenagemots, or “meetings of wise men.” To explain the nature of these assemblies, I will give a description of those of Charlemagne, taken from archbishop Wake’s “State of the Church ;” which our own are supposed strictly to have resembled. “And first, as his father before had done, he established two solemn meetings every year. The former consisted of the bishops, abbots, and peers of the realm ; in it all the political estate was settled for the year following. The latter consisted of the most ancient of these, to whom were joined some of the prince’s council ; in this, they digested and concluded

upon such matters as were to be proposed in the next general meeting; they ordered such incidental affairs as would not admit of delay, as matters of war and peace, and some others of the like kind. In these conventions, but especially in the general one, the king proposed the heads which he would leave them to deliberate upon; which, having done, the elder and more experienced determined, and the younger consented to their determination; which being over, the result of their debates was laid before the prince, who finally gave authority to what he approved of them. In these conventions, according as the matter which was to be treated of required, so a difference was observable in debating upon it. The bishops and abbots met apart from the laity; the lords and nobles were divided from the other laity by the honourable seats that were prepared for them. Sometimes they voted separately from one another and sometimes together, as the nature of the cause required; whether it were spiritual, secular, or of a mixed kind.”^b

Many of the laws made at these great councils have descended to us, and are in force at the present time, others were only suited to the age to which they belonged. Amongst these the most curious were the modes of discovering guilt and passing judgment upon the criminal. They are proofs of the barbarism of our ancestors, but tokens also of their faith in a superintending Providence.

In the absence of evidence to prove a crime, the accused parties had to go through certain tests, and the

^b Quoted from De Marca, in “Wake’s State of the Church,” page 131, c. v § 18. See, in connection, *ibid*, § 22.

event was supposed to decide their innocence or guilt. One of these tests was the heating red hot of bars of iron, over which the suspected party had to walk blindfold; the bars were placed at irregular distances, and the trembling victim was barefooted. To escape without touching one of them, or being scorched by them, was considered a proof of innocence. Another test was to throw the accused into consecrated water, when it was believed that Providence would interfere to save the party from drowning, if innocent.

All this is very contrary to our present sense of right and wrong, but it shews that the Anglo-Saxons were at least free from the kind of unbelief so common amongst us; they did not explain away the doctrine that an all-seeing eye is ever upon us, and that God "maintains the cause of the helpless." Though in many cases the clergy sanctioned these trials, it is, however, to be remembered that the feeling of the Church, as expressed in councils, has been almost invariably against them, and many canons or Church laws were passed to restrain them. Most likely because the old custom of the country was so strongly binding upon the people and engrafted with their ideas of justice and truth, the clergy had not power enough to do away with them. But doubtless the accused were not forgotten by them, nor were the earnest prayers offered on behalf of those wretched sufferers unavailing. Some among these tests may be spoken of with reverence, as being in their nature less questionable. Undoubtedly such as I am now going to mention had their origin in deep religious feeling, yet as they are only fit for such a state of feeling, so there is great danger of their degenerating into

presumption or superstition. Such a test was that of the cross ; two pieces of wood were chosen, and on one of them the figure of the cross was marked, they were then wrapped up, taken to Church, laid on the altar, and, prayers having been first offered up that the decision might be rightly guided, one was selected by the accused person ; if he chanced to choose the one having the holy sign upon it, he was pronounced innocent. Another test was the placing of a consecrated wafer in the mouth of the accused, which he was unable to swallow if guilty. It is told of Charlemagne that he decided which son should succeed him, by choosing the one who could remain the longest with his arms extended in the form of a cross.

Monasteries and Churches were now become numerous in the country, and they were endowed with estates sufficient for the support of their inmates. Already, however, had laxity crept within their sacred precincts, and abuses gained ground in the places, which, rightly, should have been consecrated alone to retirement and prayer. The clergy were not wholly to blame in this, for it was a common custom for bodies of people to band together, under a religious rule, from interested motives, solely to get from the government grants of land, where they might live unmolested ; and as such persons, if they succeeded in their attempt, were irregular, that is, without ecclesiastical sanction, or any true discipline, and generally of indifferent character, it is not to be wondered at that they brought disgrace upon the Church, as well as peril to their own souls. It is to the credit of the Anglo-Saxon clergy, that, in the regular establishments, instances of disorderly con-

duct were rare, and so completely the exception instead of the rule, that the indignation which they excited has been the means by which they have been made known to us. The Venerable Bede, in a letter of advice to archbishop Egbert, also refers to corruptions which were gradually creeping in among the clergy. "We have heard it reported," he says, "that there are many country houses or hamlets of our nation situated on inaccessible mountains, and in thick forests, where, for many years, no bishop comes to perform any of the duties of the holy ministry, or Divine grace, yet none of these is free from paying tribute to the bishop . . . some of our bishops not only do not freely preach the gospel, and confirm those who have been baptised, but do what is worse, for they receive money from their hearers, contrary to God's commands, and neglect the ministry of the word, which God ordained them to preach."^c It is only fair to mention these facts; historians must be honest, and not even paint the subject nearest their heart in too bright colours. They must not screen from blame that there were even then, among Heaven's "anointed heralds," some who forgot the sacred responsibilities of their calling, and trampled on the flock they should have cherished and nurtured. Still there are beautiful features scattered in and out through the annals of these ancestors of ours, which make ample amends for the occasional depression and disappointment excited by the detail of circumstances of a less attractive character.

The principal monasteries then established were Croyland,^d Yarrow, Glassenbury, Lindisfarne, Wear-

^c Bede, vol. ii. "Minor Hist. Works."

^d Now Crowland.

mouth, Winchester, Malmesbury, Frome, Whitby, St. Albans, Ely, and Coldingham. Besides these there were numerous other less considerable foundations, and in most of these great strictness of life was maintained. The importance of these institutions at that period is incalculable and cannot be too highly estimated ; they were the nurseries of learning and science, the refuge of the afflicted and miserable ; under the shelter of their quiet walls, music, painting, architecture, embroidery and all the peaceful arts flourished, became perfected, and had their true and lawful use, being made subservient not to the luxury of man, but to the honour of God and the welfare of the community. Agriculture and the more homely arts were likewise fostered by the monks, who had numbers of the ceorles and serfs under their immediate guardianship ; which, added to the deference shewn to them by all ranks, gave them a power like that of the civil magistrates of this day. England was now partially divided into parishes, but to what extent is not very certain, since Bede makes use of the term parish in speaking of dioceses ; but the Churches were being rapidly multiplied, and they were served by clergymen who resided in the monasteries and other religious houses, with which they were generally connected. And it was beginning to be customary with pious individuals to build Churches on their property, and set apart a portion of land for the support of a clergyman to perform the services. We have heard much of the scarcity of books in these days, but considering that every book had to be written out separately, with great labour and skill, it is rather to be wondered that there were so many. It was a rule

then that a priest could not be ordained unless he possessed "the Psalter, the book of the Epistles, the book of the Gospels, the Missal, the book of Hymns, the Manual, the Calendar, the Passional, the Penitential, and the Lectionary.^e" I shall not pretend to describe what all these books were, but merely mention it as a proof that there was no such great scarcity of them. And, besides this, many were so beautifully bound and illuminated that large sums of money and other articles of property were frequently offered for their possession; the binding of these rarer specimens being generally plates of gold or silver, or ivory, studded with gems; and they were fastened with large gold clasps.

Of the architecture of the Churches and houses not much is known. In Ireland, some of the former are still to be seen, the date of which can be traced to the very times of her patron saint, the holy Patrick. These are modelled upon the old basilica form, that is, they are oblong squares, with narrow, deep windows, splaying inwardly; they are of stone, the masonry is rude, but substantial, and the general effect solemn and religious.^f S. Ninian's Church, built in Galloway, was also of stone, and Paulinus's Cathedral, at York, as well as a few others; but many of the English Churches were of wood, which accounts for the scarcity of specimens of that date in the present day. Kilpeck, in Herefordshire, and Peranzabuloe, in Cornwall, may be considered almost old enough to furnish examples of stone Churches in the Saxon times; they differ from the Irish

^e Maitland's "Dark Ages," page 28.


^f See Mr. Petrie's "Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland anterior to the Anglo-Norman invasion."

ones in some of their details, but not materially, the main distinction being the round apse of the former, while the Irish chancels are either unmarked in the exterior of the building, or of square dimensions. In both, the roofs were generally formed of stone.

The thanes lived in castles of the heavy and substantial masonry still to be seen, occasionally, in Wales and Cornwall. Large uncouth towers, built more for defence than accommodation, heavy, gloomy, and comfortless, were the abodes most suited to a people who might at any moment be attacked, and put in peril of life and property. I have seen such a castle, which may have belonged to this period, with two walls, one within the other, and a passage between, so that if the first was stormed, the family could defend the second. These towers were generally round, and not square, like those built by the Romans. Yet, in spite of his cheerless house, a thane lived in comparative luxury, and a "chapel, a kitchen, a hall, and a bell," were among the essentials of his establishment; nor could any one claim the rank of thane who, in addition to such a dwelling, had not five hundred acres, at the least, and the broad lands of many of the great proprietors stretched through half a county. In dress, too, the higher ranks were become very sumptuous, of which the following description of a lady of those days is an example :—“She wore,” it is said, “an under-vest of fine linen, of a violet colour, and over it a scarlet tunic, with full skirts, and with wide sleeves and hood, both striped or faced with silk. The hair was curled with irons over the forehead and temples, ornaments of

gold, in the form of crescents, encircled the neck, bracelets were worn on the arms, and rings, with precious stones, on the fingers, the nails of which were pared to a point, to resemble the talons of a falcon." Of the men, the same writer adds, that "their dress was not unlike that of the female, only they wore the tunic shorter, and bound to the leg with fillets of various colours. Both sexes, on occasions of ceremony, wore mantles of blue cloth, with facings of crimson silk, ornamented with stripes or vermicular figures. The shoes of the women were of red leather, and stibium was employed to paint the face."

And now I think I have given you as clear an idea of the manners and customs of the Anglo-Saxon era as can be gained from the imperfect sources of information to which access is to be had. It must ever be a period of deep interest to the thoughtful, for then it was that our country gained the title of the "land of saints;" then it was that men who were not saints thought it no strange thing to be asked to give up whole estates, pasturages, villages, woods, and watercourses, to the service of God and the Church; and when they had done all this, they spoke of it as of a debt they had paid, and not as of a gift, they deemed that God honoured them in accepting it at their hands, and not that they honoured God by the sacrifice of their interest in the land; then it was that men who had injured their fellow-Christians were called upon to make restitution before God's altar, in the presence of his people, and that the ban of the Church was esteemed a heavier punishment than a whole world's wealth could compensate; then it was that holy places were unprofaned,



and holy days sanctified; then it was that kings, queens, and nobles, left their rank and their splendour, and the softness and luxury of a court, to lead a life of voluntary privation and self-denying obedience, in the service of their Creator, knowing that He had said, "How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

And if there is a contrast to this picture, if, on the other hand, it is suggested, that horrors of all kinds were committed among the Anglo-Saxons, because there was no authority powerful enough to punish, if murders remained unknown and unnoticed, and their perpetrators continued to be held in estimation by their fellow men, if might often constituted right, and possession law, if life and property were unsafe, and people could not travel unarmed, if even earls and thanes were often freebooters and robbers, all this, too, is true, and yet it will remain a question whether a state of things in which God's Presence is acknowledged, and His Judgments feared, even though it may be a barbarous state, is not less perilous to the soul of man than one in which His Divine Providence over their affairs is practically disbelieved, and His choicest gifts are made to minister to luxury and sin, under the specious names of civilization and refinement. And now, before I close this first part of English history, I must pay a tribute of respect and gratitude to the Venerable Bede, to whom we are indebted for most of the details which give a colouring interest to these annals. Unlike the scoffers of modern days, he put down facts as he received them, without question or comment, and the sanctity of his own mind is alone impressed upon them. His life was

devoted to the service of God, and to the promotion of sacred and useful learning. His works still extant are voluminous, and embrace a variety of subjects, arithmetic, music, metres, astronomy, the calendar, martyrology, general as well as English history, besides letters, hymns, sermons, and commentaries, still often cited, on many books of Holy Scripture, in which he follows the fathers, but with a judgment of his own. He was placed, in childhood, under St. Bennet Bishop, at Monkswearmouth, and was brought up in industrious piety there and in the neighbouring monastery of Jarrow. He learned music from John, who had come from Rome with St. Bennet, and Greek probably from some scholar or companion of archbishop Theodore. He was ordained deacon at the age of nineteen, by St. John of Beverley, then bishop of Hexham, and priest at thirty, when he became the teacher of a great school in the monastery, and spent the rest of his life in that employment, and in copying or writing books. Within a very short time of his peaceful death he was dictating a translation of part of the Gospel of St. John into Saxon. On the last day, we learn from Cuthbert, one of his scholars, that, after distributing the little memorials a monk could give, he was expounding hard texts to them, and when his answer to the last question was written down, he echoed "it is done," and bade them lay him with his face raised towards his oratory. It was the eve of the Ascension,^b and he raised his voice and said, "O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, who in triumph this day didst ascend above all heavens, leave us not comfortless, but send the promise of the Father

^b Amongst his hymns is a beautiful one for that Festival.

upon us, the Spirit of Truth, allelujah. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ;” and with that word his happy spirit was released from the body.

He has left to posterity a name which will ever be cherished by those to whom piety and virtue are dear, for it is one on which a stain was never cast. St. Bede entered into his rest in the year of our redemption, 736.

A name ! what’s in a name ? it is a spell,
The loving spirit knows its magic well ;
Like woodland breeze, its tones, with sweetness rife,
Waken our summer feelings into life.
Ask you, wherein the magic of a name ?
It rallies like the trumpet-call of fame ;
Mind, fancy, memory, every nerve it thrills,
And the roused spirit to its centre fills.
A deeper feeling yet—it is the glow
The meek, the reverent, the humble know,
When traced in words of fire some holy name
Kindles within themselves an answering flame,
Brightens life’s deathless hope, gild’s sorrow’s gloom,
And carries them in thought beyond the tomb,
To realms where, with the blest of simple days,
They join in one triumphal strain of praise ;
And muse how in the Church, through years of ill,
The spark they lighted burns serenely still.

And justly dear thy name, rich praise thy mede,
England’s own saint, the “ Venerable Bede.”
’Mid scenes of strife and sin, how sweet to see
Thy heart’s unswerving truth and constancy ;
And through thy history’s varied page to trace
Th’ unconscious witness to thy soul’s meek grace,
The cheering evidence thy words proclaim
Of faith in every age and place the same,
One true unchanging creed, one mode to paint,
Both then, as now, the Christian and the saint,

One fountain where the sin-stained soul may lave
From age to age in the same cleansing wave.
Thy name! what countless suns have risen and set,
And dear that name to England's children yet;
Thy name! as future ages pass her by
Engraved upon her heart that name shall lie,
And, like a cloister bell, in evening fair,
Its soft vibrations soothe the soul to prayer.

LECTURE XI.

HISTORY, like life, is divided into periods ; intervals there are in it which do not belong to each other, and which seem wholly distinct from one another, however nearly they may be connected in time—pauses in the great current of human affairs, which arise we know not how, from interruptions we have not foreseen, just as a stream, suddenly checked by sunken rocks, is withheld from its natural course until having gathered itself into a calm pool, it overflows in a new channel, taking a direction widely apart from its former wanderings. Such pauses are generally unnoticed or treated as unpleasant interruptions, for most persons love to hurry onwards. To the many the past becomes vapid, the future alone is engrossing ; but to those who study with a view to a higher kind of instruction than the bare knowledge of certain facts, who wish to gain a lasting benefit by what they learn, interruptions like these will be contemplated not merely as occasions of serious thought but as opportunities for indulging it ; they will wish to rest and look backwards, to trace the meaning of the facts which have been occupying their minds, by connecting and arranging them as a whole ; they will love the quiet pools of thought, as they occur on the restless stream of history, because the face of Heaven is therein reflected.

Indeed it is difficult to understand that any one, being possessed of an ordinary intellect can, as too many, alas ! do, class every event in history under some second cause, apart from the Great First Cause of all things, and the immediate control of His Divine will. Such a perversion of the reasoning power is as strange as it is startling. It is said in sacred writ, " God looked down upon the children of men to see if there were any that would understand," and elsewhere, " verily there is a God that judgeth the earth ;" these are truths which seem to engrave themselves upon every era of man's existence, to be written in words of light over every page in which his joys, sorrows, aims, hopes, fears, and struggles are recorded. Let us, then, spend the breathing time which these successive pauses give us in silent adoration of His Providence.

And of that Providence how many cheering instances have lately been brought before us, from the apparent accident that drove Caractacus to the imperial city, there to learn a nobler submission than the tyrannical power of Rome tried to impose upon him, to the bickerings and disputes which made bishop Wilfrid a preacher of righteousness among the hungry and destitute South Saxons. Seeming chances these were, as was the occurrence which fixed the lot of the Christian Bertha among a race of pagans, to pave the way for the introduction of truth, or which took St. Gregory through the slave market at Rome in the moment when so many fair children, the most beautiful of heaven's gifts to a fallen world, were lying exposed for sale, bound together like animals, the joy of their youth already quenched in sorrow, and no brighter feeling to

kindle one spark of hope in their desolate hearts ; but in reality they were no chances.

Mark, too, the successes of the first confessors of the faith in Britain, the hallelujah battle, when God fought for man and the elements fought with man ; its reception by thousands of persons at once ; the way in which saint after saint was raised to undertake the rescue of each benighted district from the “prince of this world.” How were famines and pestilences removed by their prayers, and those prayers blessed an hundred-fold in the deliverance of the sufferers from two kinds of death, temporal and spiritual ; how were the heads of families and kingdoms moved to forsake splendour and rank for a life of poverty and obedience, and how did the children of such parents, as with one mind, glorify God by a similar choice, until, in some instances, not one of a family remained to bear its honours or assert the regal dignity. It would not be well here to discuss the fitness of such a choice in the case of some who made it ; doubtless the love of the monastic life ran to excess, like a luxuriant plant, and so weakened the very principle of holiness it was meant to support ; but as a sign of the times, as a proof of the influence which personal holiness did and will exercise, wherever it is unshackled by human laws and opinions, such self-devotion is a striking and beautiful feature alike wonderful and consoling.

Think, too, how marshy wilds and thick woods, no longer the abodes of wild animals, or miserable half clothed inhabitants, became, under the influences of Christianity, scenes of beauty and peace ; where the barrenness of nature gave place to luxuriance, where

the anvil sounded, and the mill-wheel turned, and the plough was at work, and hamlets grew up like clustered ivy round the sacred homes whose presence carried a calm protection in their very aspect, whose towers, soaring into the sky, taught a daily lesson of hope under life's worst ills and sicknesses, whose massive proportions, rich with sculptured symbols, embodied to the outward eye the very truths that were learned within; until each stone seemed eloquent with praise, and each part of the building was endeared by some holy recollection to the simple unlettered rustic to whom it had been a source of instruction.

But there are parts in the history of every nation which are less plain in their meaning, in which, reflect as we may, we cannot always comprehend the mighty working of the Divine will; they are to us as enigmas that we do not know how to solve, a mist is over our faculties when we would gaze nearly upon them, and this so hides some of their principal lineaments that they remain indistinct and dim, the distance at which we see them adding to our perplexity. We are going now to enter upon just such a period, a period darkened by one heavy cloud, of which neither the cause nor the object is discernible. Bright, indeed, is the radiance shed over the era we have passed as the early dawn of a summer morning; for when we began the blackness of heathenism was on the face of our native land, then came the twilight of the fifth and sixth centuries, with its soft rays of hope and pale holy stars, that shone here and there like calm heralds of the coming day; such were the Saints Germanus, Patrick, Ninian, Columba, Augustine, and others; then, suddenly the

day broke, and the "Sun of Righteousness" arose over the English hills, and the strains of adoration that greeted that awaking have never since been exceeded in sweetness, have scarcely, if at all, been equalled in power and glory. For like the invisible working of the electric telegraph, the characters of faith were formed and spread, and hearts were moved and doctrines conveyed with a rapidity which it baffles unassisted reason to explain, and almost to imagine. But now that the land was, as we have seen, converted and at peace, and all seemed to bid fair for a continuance of these blessings, the whole surface of things became again changed, heavy and unlooked-for misfortune fell on the people, and if the Church was not altogether overwhelmed and destroyed, it was, at least, so shaken and unsettled, that for many years it existed more in hidden life with the few than in a national system.

It is impossible to decide on the moral causes of these sorrows; doubtless, as I have before said, corruptions did exist already in the Saxon Church, and excesses were on the increase among the people; but I think it would be rash to assert that they prevailed in number or extent so as to justify the decision that they were the cause of calling down the Divine displeasure upon the whole nation. Still such an assertion is not only general among the few historians of those days, but it is repeated with a degree of confidence that makes one afraid to differ from them. The five invasions of our country by Romans, Picts, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, are respectively called the "five scourges of God," and in the very period on which we are

going to enter the people are thus described by one writer :—

“ Among them was common as the carte waye
Ryot, robbery, oppressyon, night and daye.”*

But perhaps it may have been as usual for old-fashioned writers to draw a strong moral from every fact coming under their notice as it is in ourselves to stop short of any. It is because I have found a difficulty in coming to any conclusion on this point, and because the period itself seems to me to have its own distinct characteristics, and not to belong to what has gone before, that I have divided the Anglo-Saxon era into two parts, of the second of which I am now going to treat as follows.

THE REIGN OF EGBERT.

THERE was a nation in the north of Europe called the Danes, and from whom the present Danes are descended. They were originally Goths, and under the kings of Gothland, but at length they became independent, and having overspread Jutland and the neighbouring islands, they learned to build ships and to love a sea-faring life, and all the perils attending upon it. From time to time they undertook marauding excursions to the neighbouring shores, and carried off valuable booty. Being encouraged in their depredations by success, and their leaders or princes not unwilling to

* Quoted in Spelman's Life of king Alfred.

countenance this sort of exploit, they grew less and less scrupulous, until they were little better than a gang of pirates, or, as the honest old historian Collier calls them, "a set of thieves and pickpockets." Nor was this love of plunder their only vice; to attain the end they had in view and to secure their booty they stopped at no kind of enormity, murdering people "without regard to age, sex, or condition." Their ships were small, not much better than large boats, but this gave them a great advantage, as they could land almost anywhere, draw them ashore, disembark, and, on an emergency push off to sea at a few minutes notice. Such were the people who, like a large swarm of vermin, fixed upon England for the scene of their depredations, and proved for many years the scourge of her shores: they were commonly known by the name of the "black pagans," (I suppose in allusion to the colour of their hair, for the Saxons were very fair,) and they were so dreaded, not only by the English but by the Franks and all the other European nations, that even the famous Charlemagne felt his heart sink at the sight of their ships.^b

Egbert had not long been greeted with the proud title of sovereign of England, and seen his dreams of peace and power realized, when they vanished into air before the pressure of this new and formidable danger.

^b They practised roving and piracy in such cruel manner about Frisia, Belgica, England, Ireland, and France, that when the said Charles the Great saw their roving ships in the Mediterranean sea, he shed tears abundantly, and with a grievous sigh said, "Heavy I am at the heart that in my lifetime they durst come upon this coast; and I foresee what mischief they will work hereafter to my posterity." Yea, and in the public processions and litanies of Churches this afterwards was added to the rest, "From the rage of Normans [Northmen] good Lord deliver us." Quoted from Camden in "Historical Collections," p. 371.

The Danes had frequently made smaller descents upon the coast, but the first that gave real alarm was in Egbert's reign; they then plundered the Isle of Shepey, and meeting no opposition, for they were unexpected, in the following year they landed at Charmouth in Dorsetshire, intent upon fresh mischief. In this instance Egbert, who had received some notice of their approach, met them at the head of a large army, and a bloody battle was fought, of the result of which there is no very certain account, some saying that Egbert had the best of it, others that the Danes were the conquerors, and that Egbert himself only saved his life through the darkness of the night.^c Two years afterwards they made an alliance with the men of Cornwall,^d who, as being part of the old British race, were naturally disaffected, but Egbert was again beforehand with the enemy, and routed them with much slaughter^e at Hengistundune^f, in that country. He is said to have been exasperated with the Britons for having allied themselves with these foreign invaders, and to have ordered all persons who in any way claimed British descent to leave his kingdom;^g but he did not live to see his commands obeyed; and this is the last event in a reign of thirty years, during twenty of which Egbert was no higher in dignity than king of Wessex, but in the latter ten he was king of all England. He left the crown to his son Ethelwolf,

^c "For when, during the greater part of the day he had almost secured the victory, he lost the battle as the sun declined; however, by the favour of darkness, he escaped the disgrace of being conquered." William of Malmesbury.

^d A.D. 835. Rapin.

^e According to Sir John Prise's history the Danes landed in "*West Wales*," (another name for Cornwall), marched forward for England, being joined by a great number of Welch, and met Egbert upon Hengist-down, where a severe battle was fought, and the Danes put to a total rout.

^f Hengists-down.

^g History of Wales, by Sir John Prise, Knight, p. 26.

a pious and quiet prince, originally, destined to take holy orders and devote his life to the Church.^h

ETHELWOLF.

THE Danes did not allow Ethelwolf much time for repose. In the same year in which he came to the throne, A.D. 837, they landed at Southampton and at Portland. They had a curious way of managing these invasions, for they must have brought horses with them, in their small boats, and not long after their arrival, they were often to be seen scouring the country as a band of cavalry, as much at home in the saddle as in their maritime exploits.¹ Three of Ethelwolf's generals^k were successively sent at the head of an army against them; in the first battle the English were victorious, but in the two following they were beaten by the Danes, and the enemy, gaining hardihood by success, overran East Anglia, Kent, and Middlesex. In the year, A.D. 840, Ethelwolf did what he ought to have done before, he went in person against them, but the English were again worsted and had to take

^h "Ethelwolf is reported to have been so learned and devout that the Church of Winchester elected him, in his youth, bishop of that see, which function he took upon him about seven years before he was made king." Sir John Prise's *Hist. of Wales*, p. 29. "He was only sub-dean, not bishop, as is well observed by bishop Godwin, and is more evident from Thos. Rudborne's *Historia Major*, lately published by Mr. Wharton." Note to Spelman's life of Alfred, p. 16.

¹ "The Danes were remarkable for the celerity of their movements, both by sea and land. As soon as they disembarked from their ships the pirates became a force of cavalry, and dashed through England." Palgrave's *Anglo-Saxons*.

^k Wulfherd, Earl Ethelhelm, and Herbert. Rapin. "Wulfherd fought at Southampton, and died the same year, 837; Ethelhelm at Portland Isle, and was slain in battle; Herbert or Herebert was slain A.D. 838." *Saxon Chronicle*.

refuge in flight. I think the reason that the charge of cowardice has been raised against him, must have been his entrusting any of these difficult enterprises to his generals. The time had not arrived when the "Divine right of kings" was a part of the religious belief of the people, and the Saxons were in the habit of judging of their sovereigns more by their powers of guiding a campaign to a successful termination than by either their birth or their rank. Cowardice is a weakness in all, but in a prince, who should be the father of his people, it almost amounts to a vice. Yet I do not consider it proved that Ethelwolf was a coward; it seems the rather that he loved peace a little too much, and yielded to this feeling more than was prudent or desirable. As an evidence that he was not a real coward, I would mention that in his father's lifetime he once shewed great spirit in putting down an insurrection in Kent, heading the army against the insurgents; but, on the other hand, this fact seems¹ rather at variance with the statement that he was educated for the Church. In any case his reign is a remarkable one; not so much from the prominence of his own character as from the events that happened in it. One of his enactments is recorded by most historians; it was the extension all throughout the kingdom of the grant of tithes on land, or a tenth part of their produce, for the use of the clergy. A similar grant has been taken notice of in the laws of Ina and Offa, but either it had not been fully carried into

¹ It is not so much at variance as it appears at first sight. Many bishops of those days were on the field of battle during engagements; Alstan lost his life in a battle, and much as may be said of the inconsistency between the two professions of trained warrior and herald of peace, the impression then prevailed that the presence and prayers of the clergy might influence the event of the fight, if the cause were a just one.

effect, or was not general in its obligations. Ethelwolf confirmed this grant to the Church by a charter which was offered to God upon the altar ;^m the way in which all solemn gifts were then ratified. It was with this reign also that king Kenneth of Scotland was contemporary, and Ethelwolf's two principal bishops and counsellors, St. Swithin and Alstan, are likewise famed for exercising, each in his individual character, a powerful influence over both nobles and people. King Kenneth's laws are among the curious records of the time ; I will mention two of them, they shew him to have been both a thoughtful and pious prince. One runs thus :—" Let all holy days, fasts, vigils, and all solemnities instituted in honour of our Saviour or the blessed saints be respectfully observed." Another requires, "that all graves have the privilege of a holy place," and, it continues, "let a cross be set upon them to prevent their being trampled on." Of St. Swithin and bishop Alstan it will be sufficient to say, that they carried their influence in opposite directions, St. Swithin being "holy and humble of heart," a lover of peace, and, like other holy men, simple and self-denying in his habits, even

^m At St. Peter's, at Winchester. Extract from Ethelwolf's charter. Wm. of Malmesbury :—" Our Lord Jesus Christ reigning for evermore. Since we perceive that perilous times are pressing on us, that there are in our days hostile burnings, and plunderings of our wealth, and most cruel depredations by devastating enemies, and many tribulations of barbarous and pagan nations, threatening even our destruction, therefore I, Ethelwulph, king of the West Saxons, with the advice of my bishops and nobility, have established an wholesome counsel and general remedy. I have decided that there be given unto the servants of God, whether male or female, or laymen, a certain hereditary portion of the lands possessed by persons of every degree, that is to say, the tenth manse, but where it be less than this, then the tenth part ; that it may be exonerated from all secular services, all royal tributes, great and small, or those taxes which we call Wittereden. And let it be free from all things for the release of our souls, that it may be applied to God's service alone, exempt from expeditions, the building of bridges, or of forts ; in order that they may more diligently pour forth their prayers to God," &c.

ⁿ A.D. 840.

to travelling on foot instead of in any easier way, and Alstan, an early specimen of the political ecclesiastic, ambitious and designing, stirring up wars with a view to the promotion of his own schemes of aggrandizement, opposing and thwarting St. Swithin whenever it was in his power to do so, and even in one battle commanding part of the forces himself.* This style of bishop became afterwards more common in England, and when we reflect that in those days the superior clergy were considered in the light of spiritual lords, and, besides their constant attendance at court, exercised functions little short of such as were claimed by the first nobles in the land or by the sovereign himself, it is more a matter of surprise that so many of them were moderate and mild than that some few overstepped the bounds of their privileges, forgetful of the sacred tenure by which their rank was held and supported. St. Swithin had been chosen by Egbert, when a monk at Winchester, to be Ethelwolf's preceptor, and this led to his after promotion to the see of Winchester, where he died. It is also an interesting fact that the young Edmond, of whom I mean to speak presently, and to whose history a deep melancholy is attached, now began to reign in East Anglia, in the rank of tributary prince of that province; he was of the age of fifteen, and descended from the royal line of the East Anglian kings, being son to Alkmund, who fled when Offa seized the kingdom.

It is time now to say something of Ethelwolf's family. He married in early life Osburga, of the noble race of

* "Swithin, disgusted with earthly, trained his master to heavenly pursuits; Alstan, knowing that the business of the kingdom ought not to be neglected, continually inspirited him against the Danes. I should readily commend him, had he not been swayed by worldly avarice and usurped what belonged to others," &c. &c. William of Malmesbury.

Cerdic, king Arthur's most formidable opponent among the Saxon chieftains. Osburga appears to have been a lady of admirable qualities ; she was the mother of four princes, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, Ethelred, and Alfred. Ethelwolf had also another son called Athelstan,^p whom he associated with himself in the royal dignity at a very early part of his reign, ceding to him Kent as his portion of the kingdom. In the year 851, he and his father are mentioned as going together to meet the Danes, and defeating them with much slaughter at Okely in Surrey. Athelstan after this engagement, and another at Sandwich,^q where he was entirely victorious, is spoken of no more.^r

But this victory appears to have been far more considerable than any that Ethelwolf had before gained, for it so completely freed him for a time from molestation by the Danes that he was able to carry out a favourite project of visiting Rome, in which journey he was accompanied by his youngest son Alfred, afterwards so celebrated in English history, but then not more than five years of age. Whether looking prophetically to his

^p "Content with his paternal kingdom, he bestowed all the rest, which his father had subjugated, on his son Athelstan, of whom it is not known where or in what manner he died." William of Malmesbury.

^q "This year Athelstan had another dispute with the pagans, at Sandwich, in Kent, where he killed great numbers of them, took nine of their ships, and forced the rest to sheer off." Collier. And the Saxon Chronicle:—"And the same year (851,) king Athelstan, and Elebere, the eorldorman fought on ship-board, and slew a great number of the enemy at Sandwich, in Kent," &c. &c.

^r "Dr. Whitaker seems successfully to have proved the identity of St. Neot and prince Athelstan of Kent. All the old lives state positively that Neot was the eldest son of Ethelwolf; that in Latin verse, (the oldest of the Latin lives,) that he was brought up a soldier. Again, all the old historians agree that Ethelwolf had but five sons, Athelstan, by an early marriage, Alfred and his three brothers by a late. These four last sat successively on the throne of England, and were buried at Winton. He disappears at once after the great battle of Sandwich, in 851. Dr. Whitaker's elaborate life will abundantly supply any further curiosity on this subject," &c. &c. Preface to the legend of St. Neot, in the "Lives of the English Saints."

future greatness, or by his father's wish, is not certain, but pope Leo IV. gave this child the royal unction with the title of king. I think it best to lay before you the different reasons assigned for this singular act, since there is no small variance of opinion about it. Some imagine, and it seems to me that they have the best of the argument, that the recent conquests Ethelwolf had made in Wales led to the ceremony being performed, the father of Alfred intending to place him over the new province Demetia as sub-king, or tributary, thus anticipating the title of prince of Wales; others explain away the whole thing as not a regal ceremony, and meaning nothing more than the rite of confirmation, but they are evidently wrong, for the fact that he did receive the royal unction is well established; others speak of Alfred as a favourite son whose succession his father was determined to secure. It is not very material which of these views is the correct one, but Ethelwolf's will is a plain contradiction to the last, since by that document Alfred was only to succeed to the crown when each of his brothers had reigned before him; under them he is described as "secundarius." During Ethelwolf's absence from England his next son Ethelbald rebelled against him, instigated it is thought by bishop Alstan. This caused him to hurry back from Rome sooner than he intended, to recover his throne from his rebellious child, which, fortunately, was not a difficult matter, as the nobles remained firm in their allegiance. He then shewed his peaceful and forgiving disposition by yielding to his undutiful son the sovereignty of Wessex as a boon, reserving to himself only Kent, but in which division Essex and Sussex were included.

And now I must mention a circumstance which takes from Ethelwolf's character much of the interest that is otherwise attached to it, it is that previous to his return, while residing at the court of France, he committed the folly of marrying Judith, daughter to Charles the Bald, a child only twelve years of age. This unsuitable marriage might hardly be termed such by some, because it has always been a custom amongst princes and kings to strengthen their foreign alliances, but Ethelwolf could not claim that excuse ; he was old, and had heirs in the prime of manhood, for whom he might have sought foreign connections if he chose, and it was reasonable to suppose that this step of his would cause them annoyance, which in fact it did, being the assigned motive of Ethelbald's revolt. Another circumstance connected with the marriage gave yet more discontent to Ethelwolf's subjects, and perhaps induced them to aid and abet Ethelbald's treasonable scheme ; this was the way in which Judith was crowned, as queen of England, after her betrothal. I remember telling you of the infamous conduct of Edburgha, wife of Brithric, king of Wessex, by which he fell a victim to poison administered through her intrigue, but I did not tell you that this deed of hers, together with her ambitious designing ways, so exasperated the public against her, and gave the Saxons such a horror of female interference in state affairs, that they passed a law excluding every king's wife from the title of queen, or from taking any share in the government. Ethelwolf, therefore, in styling his bride queen of England, offended the prejudices of his people, and caused great soreness of feeling towards himself.

There is little more to be said of him, except to refer again to his very singular Will,* which is worthy of notice as an early instance among the Anglo-Saxons of the practice of disposing of property by will ; and by this instrument he regulated also the succession of the crown, for it provided that each of his sons should have the kingdom in turn, devising them to reign by rotation, and so cutting off their children from all inheritance of the regal dignity until the four brothers had ceased to exist ; an arrangement which was scrupulously obeyed. This, then, was the position of affairs : Athelstan, if alive, had taken the religious habit ; Ethelbald continued to reign over the kingdom of Wessex ; and Ethelbert succeeded his father in Kent, until, on Ethelbald's death, he became sole sovereign of the country and its dependencies.

ETHELBALD AND ETHELBERT.

OF Ethelbald, who began his reign in rebellion against his own parent we can hardly expect to hear anything favourable, and the event justifies this impression. Not long afterwards he married his father's widow, the young Judith, and was living in this sinful connexion when St. Swithin, fearless of consequences to himself, openly rebuked him for his crime, and succeeded, by

* " Soon after, thinking more of providing for a better life, and of settling love and peace among his children, by an hereditary epistle (saith Florentius), he sets out their several portions, leaving the kingdom (parted as it was,) to his two eldest sons, his private inheritance he distributes among his children and near allies, and his money partly to them and partly to pious uses, and so dies about the space of two years after his return from Rome." Spelman's *Life of Alfred*, book I. p. 27.

the Divine blessing, in disengaging him from it. It is said by some, and we may hope they are right in their assertion, that, during the short interval which passed between this circumstance and his death, his conduct was much improved, and that he governed his people judiciously.

Nothing could be more disastrous than Ethelbert's career or more unfortunate than his policy. When he first ascended the throne there was a growing disunion among the provinces. Northumberland had almost regained its independence ; and already some steps had been taken in that direction to court an alliance with the Danes, with a view to an entire separation from the head of the kingdom. The difficulties with which Ethelbert had to contend were likewise augmented by incessant broils between neighbouring states, calling for his interference in many directions at the same time ; and because the Danes had not made incursions for some years past the people had ceased to fear them, and, taking no precaution to fortify the coast against them, they were suddenly surprised by their arrival in a larger body than before. Then it was that Ethelbert, feeling his inability to drive them away, was mad enough, or weak enough, I do not know which to call it, to offer them money to go, thus betraying his own fears and tempting them to take advantage of his pusillanimity, which they were but too ready to do. He lived to repent of his ill-judged measure, which brought the Danes upon him in such swarms that it was soon necessary to turn all his resources into the means of opposing them : but death put a stop to his efforts about the year 866, when Ethelred succeeded, without opposition, to his crown and his troubles.

ETHELRED.

Disastrous indeed were the events that ushered in a reign which, under more favourable auspices, might have been a bright and happy one ; Ethelred was brave and pious, and well fitted to govern well. He had also an able assistant and friend in that brother who was afterwards destined to be so conspicuous in English history, I mean Alfred the Great, now about eighteen years of age, and already distinguished by his blameless life and extraordinary genius. In Ethelred's numerous and bloody engagements, for his reign was made up of little else, and rest and peace were strangers to him, it was Alfred who was ever at his side, planning, fighting, suggesting, and doing all that lay in his power to avert the evils which seemed ready to overwhelm the country in one common ruin.

It is thought that Alfred ought at that time to have been king over Wales, and that Ethelred kept him back from his rights, putting him off with promises for the future, and not liking to relinquish so large a portion of the royal territory ; but whether this were the case or not, and it is more than doubtful, there seems to have been no disunion between the brothers in consequence. Ethelred had promised Alfred half of any lands he could reclaim from the Danes, which satisfied the young prince fully as much as immediate sovereignty, if indeed he could have any wish for the crown, beset as it then was with thorns rather than with jewels.

But this offer shews the state of things more clearly than a thousand descriptions could do ; it was a forlorn

hope. It will be necessary to touch a little upon a few facts closely connected with these disasters, in order that you may comprehend the exact position of Ethelred and the straits to which he was driven.

The Danes, who continued to cross over and infest the country, now occupied the Isle of Thanet, which they made their winter quarters. From thence they had ravaged Kent, and they next attacked Northumberland. They alleged private quarrels as one reason for the unmitigated barbarity of their conduct, although it seems all of a piece with what had gone before, and to have little to do with any other motive than the love of plunder. But their excuse is contained in the following narrative. It appears that Lodebroch, the father of Ivar, or Regnar, one of their kings, had met his fate in England.¹ There are two accounts of Lodebroch's end; the Danish legends say that he was thrown into a ditch full of serpents to be stung to death, and that he sang a war song as his spirit passed away. This is the popular account; another is, that he was murdered in a wood, through jealousy, by Bern, king Edmond's falconer, who did not like to be excelled in his art by a stranger.² By the first account, the scene of his death was the kingdom of Northumbria; according to the second, he was cast away in East Anglia, and in his destitute condition was received and

¹ He is sometimes called Regnar Lodebrok, and not Lodebroch's son, Lodebrok being, it is said, a surname relating to the shaggy garments which were worn by Regnar. He was undoubtedly a person of great note in his own country, where, to this day, his fame is celebrated by the Danish historians.

² "That Ragnar Lodebrok was murdered by Ella, and not in East Anglia, (as the lives of St. Edmond say,) is concluded from the *Quida Lodbrokar*, supposed to be the composition of Aslauga, and the unanimous voice of the Danish historians." From the *Lives of the English Saints*, Legend of St. Neot, vol. iv.

hospitably entertained at king Edmond's court, who had no hand in the wicked and treacherous deed of his falconer. It is probable that as both agree in the fact of his being shipwrecked, as well as in his never having returned alive to his native country, the variation of the two statements in other particulars may have arisen from an uncertainty as to his real fate; each account may have been received and credited by different persons in different localities, but the impression that he had been cruelly murdered was the same in either case, and calculated to rouse the spirit of the savage Danes even had they needed this apology for their rapacity. Something too is said of a collusion between the Danes and Northumbrians, by which the former were secretly invited over to assist king Ella against Osbert, who also laid claim to the crown. The cause of this struggle is thus told: Osbert was the lawful king of Northumbria, but having incurred the just hatred of his people, by a crime so dark and treacherous that one and all turned from him with disgust, he was nominally deposed, and Ella elected in his place. Osbert not submitting to resign his dignity, civil war divided the unhappy province, and some of those who took Ella's part in the quarrel sent to the Danes for assistance, which the sons of the murdered Lodebroch were but too ready to afford, instigated as much by the hope of plunder as by the wish to revenge their father's death. But whatever influence all these causes may have had in hastening the ruin of the country, the effect would, I imagine, have been the same, for the Danes were notoriously unscrupulous, and they were now so well acquainted with the pious habits of the Anglo-Saxons in

enriching their Churches with jewels and articles of value, that, in reality, they needed no excuse to commence a system of plunder from which neither the fear of God nor of man had any power to restrain them.

Although the Church had not been long established throughout our native country, already the chalices, altar plate, reliquaries, crosses, and the hangings of the altar, and dresses of the clergy, spoke to the existing belief that nothing is too good for the service of God. The protection of such valuables did not consist in the number of the clergy, the thickness of the walls of the monasteries, or the warlike character of the defenders; it was the sense the people had that it is an awful thing to meddle with what belongs to the Church that withheld them from touching property so appropriated; they did attach a meaning to the word sacrilege which we have almost lost, and which, whether it arise from reverence or superstition, (for it may actuate the unholy as well as the good), is one of the strongest principles that can animate the human breast. This removed, and what were the clergy but a flock of defenceless sheep, whose doctrine of bearing and "suffering the loss of all things" must of necessity, if they were consistent, leave them utterly destitute of all aid except from the Most High? It now seemed that this aid, so often wonderfully vouchsafed before, was to be withdrawn; a cloud was over the Church, darkness fell upon her, the "heathen raged furiously," billows of affliction rolled in, and she seemed to sink down in a mighty sea of troubles. Edmond, king of East Anglia, was among the first victims of Danish cruelty, and his death one of the most saddening events in

Ethelred's most miserable reign. Edmond was a gentle and a pious prince, endeared to his people by every virtue, and still in the prime of youth. His kingdom was attacked by Hinguar and Hubba, two of Lodebroch's sons. He met the last mentioned in battle, where he suffered a sore defeat, the Danes driving the East Anglians quite out of the field. Edmond was accompanied, on this occasion, by his tutor, bishop Humbert, and they took refuge in a Church, or near one, according to the popular legend; they were both discovered, brought before Hinguar, and put to death. Edmond was tied first to a stake, or, as Brompton says, a tree, and then shot at with arrows, because he refused to abjure the Christian faith. An ancient tree, named as the very one, has recently been cut down, and arrow-heads found far within the wood; but this would not establish the fact, unless it appeared that the after-growth was that of nine hundred and eighty years. At last the Danish king became furious and ordered him to be beheaded. The legend to which I alluded above gives the name of Goldbridge to a bridge near Hoxne in Suffolk, in consequence of Edmond's having concealed himself beneath one of the arches, where he was discovered by the glitter of his gold spur in the moonlight; he became an object of attention to a newly married couple, who were crossing the bridge together, and they treacherously betrayed him to the Danes, which caused the bridge to become so odious in after years, that no bride or bridegroom would put foot upon it lest Edmond's dying malediction should overtake them.* St. Edmondsbury abbey bears witness that posterity

* Palgrave's Anglo-Saxons.

considered this young prince both a saint and a martyr.⁷

Within a short time from the date of this event the ravages of the Danes became most fearful; Osbert and Ella were both slain, and these infuriated invaders but completed the destruction of one place to rush headlong on another. Monastery after monastery fell; Tyne-mouth, Lindisfarne, Coldingham, Croyland, Peterborough,⁸ Ely, all became smoking ruins, all their inmates shared the same fate; and that fate was death under the most horrible and cruel circumstances, by fire and by sword.

It was indeed a "reign of terror;" whole districts were depopulated, for the desolations were not confined to Churches and religious houses, everywhere the result was the same; no mercy was shewn to the helpless, not even innocent infancy met with protection, age was unhonoured, and virtue outraged: the barbarians swept onwards like a mighty torrent, leaving the country behind them a desert. A few of these disasters shall be detailed separately in another lecture.

⁷ He was killed A.D. 870.

⁸ Medeshampstead.

LECTURE XII.

I BELIEVE that the impression left upon your minds by what I am now going to tell you will be that of deep interest, but interest of so painful a nature that it may rather cause shuddering awe than a quiet acquiescence in the course of the Divine Providence. Not that we ought for a moment to question the working of that **Mysterious Providence**. “Whatever is, is right :” not because it is, but because a loving Father wills it ; this is a distinction we should love to make. Nor ought our pleasure ever to be quite unmixed in contemplating sufferings for the truth’s sake, even though they enrich the Church with martyrs, for this supposes a degree of insensibility in our nature. And yet, in the sufferings of the holy of former ages, the pain they excite is so generally blended with recollections of the end for which these sufferings were endured, and of the fruit which they brought forth in rich abundance, that we do not realize the pangs of the individuals, in triumphant rejoicing at their courage and constancy. We know that they are “gone to rest with the sign of faith, and sleep the sleep of peace,” our nerves scarcely thrill when their tortures are described, or if there is a slight thrill, it is rather through the longing that we ourselves could thus suffer, thus be glorified. But the history of the ravages of the Danes is an exception to this rule, it is a whole page of mourning, where the triumphs of

faith appal, not excite, where a chill falls upon the heart which is never removed while the subject lasts, which seems to paralyse every faculty that we possess.

For seventy years the scourge was upon the land unmitigated and unchanged : the following narratives will bring us acquainted with some of the most moving incidents connected with it.

There is a spot of ground in the north of England called Holy Island ; it is on the east boundary, below Berwick, on a part of the coast marked in the map as Durham, although more properly belonging to Northumberland. There the tide ebbs and flows twice in the day, leaving the space between the island and the mainland mostly dry, although at others it is covered with water. It was here that the monastery of Lindisfarne was first founded, by that holy Aidan of whom so much has been said in a former part of this history, and whose saintly life and manners you cannot have forgotten. While he remained upon earth it was his wont to retire to Lindisfarne every now and then, to reside with his monks, and the beautiful regulations which he established and left to his successors were cherished and followed by more than one of them ; so that their names have descended to us with the “ odour of sanctity ” attached to them. The most justly famed of Aidan’s successors was St. Cuthbert ; and when he was removed to a better world, his relics, after the manner of the Church in old times, were venerated and prized, and the spot where they lay buried became much honoured and frequented. This monastery was one of the first which the Danes pillaged, which event happened as early as the year 793 ; and, such a

thing as the destruction of a monastery being then an unheard of enormity, it caused a great sensation, and was a source of grief and surprise to every one, the news even reaching Alcuin in Charlemagne's court, who burst into tears on hearing it, and afterwards wrote a most beautiful letter to the surviving monks, enquiring into the cause of the calamity, and warning them to look upon their sorrow as the "Lord's chastening, taking heed to correct anything that had been amiss in their conduct."

About the time we are speaking of all the effects of this ravage had disappeared, and the monastery had been rebuilt, and was flourishing under the direction of bishop Erdulph. Great then was the consternation of its inmates when they heard that their old enemy was again approaching, and that the noble abbey of Tynmouth, already their prey, had been reduced to ashes. Former experience having taught them what they had to expect, they did not hesitate as to the line of conduct best to be pursued, but packing up their valuables, (by which expression I mean the relics and ornaments belonging to the Church,) and determining to carry with them wherever they went the dear remains of their patron St. Cuthbert,* they started on a melancholy journey, of which neither the end nor the perils were known to them, they, in fact, knew only that at Lindisfarne they dared not remain, and they determined to be guided, as to their future destination, by a higher

* St. Cuthbert, on his death-bed, left this warning to his brethren at Lindisfarne, which was probably the reason of their conduct on this occasion. "And know and remember, that if of two evils you are compelled to choose one, I would rather that you should take up my bones, and leave these places, to reside wherever God may send you, than consent in any way to the wickedness of schismatics, and to place a yoke upon your necks." Bede, vol. ii. Life of St. Cuthbert. chap. xxxix.

will than their own. In this way they wandered about from place to place, often distressed for food, frequently wishing to settle down somewhere, and finding it impracticable, owing to obstacles which arose. All this time they never parted from the precious remains of the saint, but guarded them with religious care night and day. Meanwhile their little company dwindled away ; at the first, besides the monks, it consisted of a number of other people, the greater proportion of whom had either lived on the lands belonging to Lindisfarne and regarded the monks as their lawful masters or protectors, or had followed in the same company, because, unsettled and dangerous as the times then were, they attached an idea of safety to the neighbourhood of the blessed saint's remains, and could not bear to go away from them. But as the troubles in the land grew, so grew the difficulty of obtaining food for such a number ; one by one they fell off, until at last, the bishop, the abbot, and seven men who had determined never to forsake St. Cuthbert with life, were all that were left of the large party who had wandered from the peaceful island of Lindisfarne seven years before ; for indeed, for seven years had these poor people gone about hither and thither carrying the body of a dead man ! Had they carried gold or jewels it might have fared ill with them, but no Dane cared to rob them of such a treasure as this, and they were at length permitted to find it a resting place in what is now Durham Cathedral, where the saint's body, it is alleged, still reposes, in spite of the painful convulsions which have given other holy relics to mockery and destruction. The shrine in which it was deposited

having been destroyed at the Reformation, the relics were rescued and interred secretly in a spot known then but to two or three persons, and perhaps now altogether forgotten.^b The posterity of the seven men who watched them so faithfully night and day, during the seven year's journey, considered it for long after a

^b "There is no reason to believe that after this translation, in 1104, any attempt was made to explore the state of the body before the visitation of the commissioners in the reign of Henry VIII. The shrine was despoiled and destroyed by them in 1537, and the coffin was then brought from the feretory and deposited in the vestry, where it was opened and the body found to be apparently entire, with the exception of the cartilage at the tip of the nose, which had fallen away. In 1540 the monks were superseded by a dean and chapter of secular canons, by whose orders, in the beginning of 1542, the old coffin was enclosed in a new one, and then deposited in a vault, under the very spot where the shrine had formerly stood. Almost three hundred years afterwards, on the 17th of May, 1827, this vault was privately opened by the Rev. W. Darnell, prebendary of the sixth stall, and the Rev. Jas Raine, the rector of Meldon. The upper course of masonry, at the foot of the vault, was composed of loose stones, a proof that an entry had already been made once at least since its construction; within was found a large coffin, of oak, in a state of great decay, the lid of which was loose, and bent up on the sides like a trough, and within this another coffin, in still greater decay, the mouldering remains of which covered, with dust and fragments, the original contents. When these, with a skull and a number of bones, were cleared away, the fragments of a third coffin were found, and beneath them another skull, and the disjointed bones of a human skeleton at the bottom of all. The question is were these last the bones of the sainted bishop of Lindisfarne? There is a tradition, to which formerly much credit was paid, that the monks, before their ejection, had substituted, by way of precaution, the body of some other person for that of St. Cuthbert, and had buried the latter in a distant part of the Church; and the English Benedictine monks still preserve with secrecy an ancient plan of the building, in which the spot, supposed to be the present resting-place of the body, is distinctly marked. Now it should be observed, first, that this tradition cannot be correct, as far as it concerns the monks, for they were ejected in 1540, and the vault was not built before 1542. If, then, any removal of the body took place, it must have been while the secular canons were in possession, from that time to the reign of Elizabeth. Secondly, in 1104 there were enclosed in the coffin a small plate of gold lying on the forehead—(such plates were worn in imitation of that worn by St. John the Evangelist. Eusebius, Hist. l. iii. c. 31; l. v. c. 24,)—a chalice, a paten, and a pair of silver scissors. These were articles of value, and their absence from the coffin in the vault may be explained on the supposition that they were purloined when the shrine was rifled by the commissioners. With them were also enclosed the reputed skull of St. Oswald, a burse, a small portable altar, and a comb, and all these, of little value, were still found in the coffin. Their presence seems to prove that this was at least the original coffin, and to make it highly improbable that the remains of the saint were ever removed from it. But, then, many things were found in the coffin which certainly were not there in 1104, such as the first skull, and the bones already mentioned, a very valuable stole, and two maniples, and a pectoral cross of gold, weighing fifteen pennyweights and twelve grains. To me it seems probable that they were placed there by the prebendaries, who, aware of their approaching ejection, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, introduced into the tomb, as a place of security, the other relics of the Church, and the most

proud claim to be able to say they were so descended.* Shortly after the monastery had been left, in the manner I have related, the Danes entered it, under the command of Halfdene, a son of Lodebroch, and very soon the flames arose from the sacred pile, and it was a second time a smoking ruin. But much more dreadful atrocities were committed by the pagans at Coldingham and Croyland.

Coldingham was a nunnery, and, nearly two hundred years before the catastrophe of which I am going to tell you, the laxity of its discipline had been a cause of great scandal to the Church. I am alluding to St. Cuthbert's time, when it was a new thing to hear of those vows being broken which set apart the inmates of a monastery to the highest and holiest services, requiring of them an entire consecration of mind and body. But new and startling as it was, and almost impossible as it might seem to those acquainted with monastic regulations and their uncompromising character, it was true then, and became alas! in later days of much more frequent occurrence, when the world's wealth had overflowed upon the Church and tempted to ease and

valuable articles belonging to the feretory. The reader will recollect that the vault had been opened, at least once, before it was opened in 1827." Extracted from Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii. page 81. See also the account beginning page 73 of the same vol. of the disinterment of St. Cuthbert in 1104. St. Cuthbert died A.D. 689, was first disinterred in 698, was removed by the piety of the monks from Lindisfarne about 869 or 870 and in 990 finally translated to Durham Cathedral from the smaller Church not far off where the saint's relics were at first deposited.

* "These were they who had been brought up and educated by the monks, and when these were found wanting, had undertaken to follow the holy body of the venerable saint from Lindisfarne, and never whilst they lived to leave it. Four of them, who seem to be older than the others, were Hundred, Stithard, Edmund, and Franco, from whose race many of the province of Northumberland, both priests and laymen, are the more proud of being descended, because that their ancestors are said to have attended with such fidelity on the body of the holy Cuthbert." Taken from the narrative of the translation of St. Cuthbert, &c. Thorpe's translation.

softness those whose profession pledged them to continual self-denial and voluntary poverty. In the case of Coldingham, Satan had prowled round the fold of purity unseen and unsuspected, and an accident only brought to light the fact that some of its inmates had fallen into his toils. We are not told by what means the disgrace and shame of this discovery was wiped away, and Coldingham regained, as an establishment, the respect and confidence of the surrounding neighbourhood ; but when the Danes were committing the ravages now under our consideration, that foundation was again the abode of peace and chastity. The steadfast virtue of Ebba, the last abbess, is in beautiful contrast to this fall of former days ; and although the community perished in the flames, its inmates were mercifully preserved from the more dreadful fate which, in those saddening times, even the most innocent females could not escape.^d These monsters had just completed the pillage of Lindisfarne and were making their way towards Coldingham ; Ebba received some notice of this terrible fact, and knowing the brutal ferocity of the Danish soldiers, and that they were close at hand, she summoned the sisterhood to meet her in the chapter-house ; arrived there, she first gave them a parting exhortation, and then, drawing a knife from her bosom, inflicted upon her face a disfiguring gash. It was sufficient for her to set the example ; the sisters loved and revered their spiritual mother, their vows and their purity ; it was followed in meek submission and calm fortitude by all. The blood

^d The authority for this story is Matt. of Westminster. It is doubted by Lingard, as having, he says, no confirmation in the works of the older historians. It is mentioned in a note in Spelman's "Life of Alfred," and seems to carry with it a good deal of circumstantial evidence, and the fact that Ebba was afterwards held a saint is in favour of its truth.

rushed out upon them, and when the savage Danes entered they turned with horror from the heart-sickening spectacle. But it had no effect in changing their cruel nature ; and, having satisfied their love of plunder, they set fire to the buildings, and the flames soon bore those faithful and earnest females by a short and speedy passage to the regions of blessedness.* They died, as they had lived, pure ; and if they did not act rightly according to the notions of some, nor reap such recompense of their innocence as our short-sighted dreaming might have wished, still none will doubt that they attained to that reward of unbroken faith and love which “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”†

Croyland abbey, of the destruction of which a most moving tale has reached us, was built in the middle of a marsh ; you will remember the swamp in which St. Guthlac lived the life of a hermit. How he retained his health among its noxious vapours it is difficult to conceive ; but perhaps those who can survive their first initiation to such an atmosphere may be sufficiently sturdy to live on in it for many years, and a simple mode of life, undisturbed by excitement, may be supposed to have disarmed the malignity of climate. After all, too, St. Guthlac only did the same thing as our emigrants do, in the wilds of North America, in pursuit of temporal gain, whereas the gain of the saint was to be eternal. I must not be supposed, in saying this, to be making the defence of the hermit system ; as well might I attempt, in these widely different days, to excite a desire to follow such an example ; nor am I quite sure

* Sixth beatitude. Matt. v. 8.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9.

that would-be hermits, (for I suppose there are a few,) might not, if they could find a spot dreary enough for their purpose, discover, that the greater self-denial consisted in remaining in the exercise of duties which their lot in life had imposed upon them. But another way of thinking prevailed when St. Guthlac entertained Ethelbald, afterwards king of Mercia, in his uncomfortable cell; and the power which the hermit had over him and many of that day, is so blended with his own manner of life, in our minds, that it would be difficult to say that the two could be separated without loss to the saint or to the Church. When he died, and piles of wood were driven into the morass to be the foundation of another kind of religious asylum, in remembrance of his sanctity, there was less to wonder at in the situation chosen. Agricultural labour, the ordinary occupation of Benedictine monks, would soon change the marsh into fertile land, and the patronage of king Ethelbald enable its inhabitants to command at once the means of keeping out the cold and wet ;^s besides which, as many enemies must be guarded against in unsettled times, and not even monasteries were safe from being attacked, a certain extent of water or boggy land around might prove a useful defence; there is indeed, in the remains of buildings of this date a great appearance of strength; the walls of old Roman fortifications were chosen as the sites of some monasteries, as for instance, Burgh Castle, on the Suffolk coast, and all had very thick walls with small narrow apertures for light and air.

^s "Ethelbald gave £300 in silver, and £100 a year, for ten years to come, towards the building, with directions to invite monks of good reputation to form a society there, leave to build a town, and right of common and fisheries for themselves and their servants, &c." From an abridgement of Mr. Gough's Hist. of Croyland Abbey.

Ethelbald's foundation of Croyland soon became famous. In a cell in the Church belonging to the monastery, Etheldritha, daughter to Offa, the promise of whose early youth had been blighted by the murder of her betrothed husband, led for many years a life of devotion, and afterwards there received and protected Wichtlaff, the Mercian king, in the year 827, when he fled from his enemies. He remained for four whole months hidden in her cell, and on his restoration to prosperity he carried back to his throne a deep-seated love for the place of his retreat ; every year he visited it, to join in the calm prayers that had soothed his distress, and many and splendid were the gifts where-with, in his gratitude, he enriched its Church ; among others a gold table was perhaps the most remarkable. Such was the state of Croyland in the beginning of these troubles ; it was one of the most flourishing of the English monasteries, and although the marsh did surround it still, for we hear the lake spoken of as being at hand, yet the space of ground covered by buildings must have formed a considerable island, to have afforded a home to the numerous monks and lay-brothers of the institution.

It would appear that, unnatural as the act of defence seems, in a religious body, some military precautions had been taken by the brethren to avert the fate which seemed impending over them. A monk called Toly, who had formerly served in the army, feeling his old warlike habits revive, headed two hundred stout men belonging to the abbey lands, and joining Count Algar, an earldorman of great influence, who had collected together a body of thanes and their serfs, they marched

against the Danes, intercepting them and attacking them with such success that three of their kings fell in the action ; but through want of regular discipline among the Christians, the success was badly followed up, and the Danes renewing the attack, three fourths of Algar's band fled, while those who remained, among whom were the brave count and the monk Toly, were surrounded and slain. A few stragglers survived to carry the sad tale back, and they arrived at the monastery before dawn, when the brethren were engaged in chanting the matin service. Theodore, the aged abbot, did not take long to decide what it would be best to do under these appalling circumstances ; there was not a moment to be lost, for the Danes were in full march for Croyland. With calmness and fortitude he proceeded to give all the necessary orders ; those treasures which were most precious, or could be most easily removed, he entrusted to the care of the hale and strong, and they were ordered to make their escape immediately, hiding themselves at first in the wood opposite the island. Their preparations were soon completed, and with a sad and sorrowful, but not a sinking heart, Theodore bade them farewell, and found himself left defenceless, his sole associates being a few aged men, and children, who could not attempt to fly and were therefore his unwilling companions ; with them the heroic Theodore resolved to remain, calmly awaiting the fate his Heavenly Father designed for him. King Wichtlaff's table, too heavy to carry, was yet to be concealed, with some difficulty this was effected, and then the party assembled for prayer, but not in a disorderly or frantic manner ; all was conducted as if nothing

had occurred to break the ordinary regularity of their devotions ; they dressed themselves carefully, the usual psalms were chanted, the bread of life was consecrated and offered upon the altar. In between the pauses in that sweet and solemn service the shouts and yells of the enemy became more and more distinct, and before it was concluded the cries sounded as if on the very outskirts of the abbey. Still the monks prayed ; it was a moment of intense anxiety, in another there was a furious rush onwards, the Church was filled with the Danish soldiers, and the whole of that devoted band were surrounded and slain ; but not until they had had time to communicate in the sacred mysteries, and feel the life that death cannot destroy enter into their souls. Thus they died, all but a beautiful boy, ten years of age, whose earnest petition that he too might be killed with those he loved, won pity even from the hard heart of a Dane. In this massacre the abbot Theodore had been the first to fall by the hands of king Osketul ; the others endured a more lingering agony, being put to the torture, that they might be driven to confess where the treasures of the abbey were hidden, but not a word could be extracted from them, and the Danes never touched what had been so faithfully concealed. King Wichtlaff's table is thought to have remained in the marsh until now ; for on searching for it afterwards it could not be found. The savages therefore revenged themselves with destroying the shrines of St. Guthlac and other benefactors of the abbey, and setting the place on fire.

Very early one morning, four days after the foregoing events had taken place, a young child was seen on the opposite side of the water where Croyland abbey once

stood ; it was Turgar, on whom count Sidroc, one of the Danish chiefs, had taken compassion at the time of the massacre. He had escaped from their camp the evening before, and, walking all night, had found his way back to the scene of desolation, but so foot-weary and changed in appearance that it was difficult to recognise in him the beautiful boy who had so recently assisted the abbot Theodore in the choir. He was not the first to return ; the monks, who had been sent away with the treasures of the monastery, were already there and busily employed in trying to quench the flames which continued to burst out from the still smoking pile. Turgar was gladly welcomed by them ; but soon was their joy turned to mourning, when the heroic boy related how all their companions, himself only excepted, had perished, and even pointed out the different spots where it was probable that their bodies would be found. To search for these and give them holy burial was the first duty of the survivors, and, this performed, we may almost fancy they could do little else than weep.⁵ It may occasion surprise to some that that young boy was so insensible to any idea of his

⁵ After the destruction of Croyland, Medeshampstead monastery was the next to suffer ; but the relation separately of each of these melancholy events would occupy too much space, unless these lectures were lengthened out beyond what seems desirable. Turgar was at the destruction of Medeshampstead, and when the martyrs of Croyland had been consigned to their graves, he accompanied Godric, whom the survivors appointed abbot, in Theodore's place, to perform the same sad duty there. On their arrival the whole of the bodies were collected and buried, under a small pyramid of stone, before the entrance to the Church ; a stone cross was erected opposite, with the figure of our Saviour engraved upon it, and upon the pyramid were recorded the particulars of their fate ; the public road passed between the pyramid and the cross. Fuller calls this spot " four square yards of martyr's dust, which no place else in England doth afford." Medeshampstead is now Peterborough. Godric rebuilt the monastery of Croyland, and made it an asylum for all who sought to escape the fury of the Danes. For many months it was crowded with men, women, and children, the expense of maintaining whom, together with the levies exacted by Burrhed, king of Mercia, who seized its revenues, to aid him in the defence of the kingdom, reduced it to

worldly interests as to prefer, at all risks, to return to Croyland, rather than seek new interests among the associates with whom fate had so strangely thrown him; but Turgar may have had that shrinking from the Danes which seemed an universal feeling then; his heart, too, had been nurtured in love and prayer, and how could he see such atrocities as they committed and wish to remain with the actors in them? It seems natural that he should avail himself, therefore, of the first moment that gave him any chance of escape, and as natural that he should wend his way back to the scene of his childhood. But one part of his history is less natural; it is that when many years had passed, and the ravages of the Danes had left the land a waste, and monastic rule was almost extinct everywhere, few considering themselves bound by their vows, and fewer still circumstanced so as to be able to keep them, this Turgar, the fair child taken captive in the sack of Croyland abbey, remained steadily constant to the early training which he had received, being mentioned at a later period as still alive, and one of three monks only who kept up the name and regulations of that noble abbey. His indeed was a beautiful constancy, and it would almost seem as if his sufferings in that one memorable night had given a stamp to his character which no lapse of time could afterwards efface, for it was the interest which he, in his old age, was able to excite by the narrative of his sufferings, that led eventually to the restoration of the monastery.

such a state of poverty that scarcely any were found willing to embrace the vows within its walls. He, however, with a few other monks remained faithful to their engagements, although sometimes so straitened and distressed that Godric was heard to wish, in his anguish, that he had not escaped the slaughter of the Danes, but had followed his predecessors to the grave. See *Ingulphi Hist.*

The foregoing moving incidents, which I have gone out of my way to relate, will shew what Ethelred's reign must have been, and are a fit introduction to the career of the Christian hero by whom he was succeeded. We left Alfred assisting his brother in all the disastrous engagements that took place. Nine successive battles were fought within a very short period of time, but at Ashdown only, in Berkshire, was there anything that could be called a victory on the part of the English. Swarm after swarm the Danes arrived until resistance seemed hopeless ; yet did not these swarms act together, or matters would have been still worse ; they continued as they had begun, a set of lawless freebooters, destroying, wasting, and without any end in view but plunder. The battle of Ashdown^b furnishes a fact which speaks well for Ethelred's character. It appears that Alfred had, in a fit of impetuosity, nearly lost the fortunes of the day, for he commenced the action without waiting for his brother's assistance or co-operation, and the Danes, having hemmed him in on many sides, his case became desperate, unless Ethelred could bring up the forces under his command in time to make a diversion in his favour. Alfred's difficult position, and this critical state of affairs, was made known to Ethelred while he was at his morning prayers. The usual service was in the course of celebration and the king gave orders that it should not be interrupted ; " While I live," he said, " no worldly occasion shall make me forsake the service of God : " it was a noble firmness.

The trumpet's clanging voice was near,
The shout of death was on his ear,
But, with his eye in Heaven,

^b Ashton, in Berkshire, according to some ; Essendune or Essenden, in Surrey, according to others.

Silent he stood, like oak his form,
That meets unmoved the rushing storm ;
And his wrapt thoughts were given
To Him Whose word of power can stay
The madness of man's wildest fray.

And Ethelred was not unrewarded ; when the service was ended, strengthened by prayer, he rushed to the rescue and the result was victory !

Then fell Bagseg, a king by title, and five other men of rank among the Danish forces—earls they were ; two of them Sidrocs, father and son, (one of these possibly the nobleman who had saved the boy Turgar in the sack of Croyland Abbey,¹) and the others, Oslem, Fræne, and Harold : it was a real triumph.

And now it only remains to mention the death, from a mortal wound, of the estimable and conscientious Ethelred. He reigned five years, or rather he lived a nominal king through that space of time, struggling with bravery to the last against an overpowering weight of troubles, which finally crushed him.² He left his unhappy country, recently more advanced in art and science and the pursuits of literature than any kingdom in Europe, like a field over which a blight has passed, a blackened and dreary waste, its people a scattered and melancholy remnant, without strength, energy, or resources. Well might the Danish invasion be termed a scourge and a judgment, although we should not too closely define the sin for which the realm was thus visited, lest, in so doing, we, who have far higher privileges and stronger light, be but pronouncing our own condemnation.

¹ Count Sidrok the younger is said to have been Turgar's protector.


² Fuller says he "withered away in the flower of his age," through the distress the Danes cost him." Vol. i. page 177. He died in the year 871.

LECTURE XIII.

WE may now turn to a brighter subject, and having passed through the most painful passages of the reign of Ethelred, dwell with a degree of calmness on vicissitudes which aided in forming such a noble mind as king Alfred's. The snow chills the earth and seems to kill the tender plant, but ever where it lay the heaviest are the fairest flowers found; and trials too, heaven-sent, like the snow, overwhelm at first, only that they may nurture the more surely the rich bloom of an everlasting spring.

A career like Alfred's, indeed, is for eternity, not for time; although, in his case, time has done ample justice to his merit, by the almost universal respect which is shewn to his memory.

When character is to be traced, even the trifling emotions of a feeble child are of importance; and so the foregoing reign, nominally ended, must again be recurred to, that we may give the first years of Alfred their due prominence. It has already been told of him, that, when five years old, his father took him to Rome, and there, at that early age, he was solemnly consecrated to his future office, and received from the hands of pope Leo the royal unction, or that anointing which it was the custom to give to kings at their coronation. Alfred, could hardly have been indifferent to such a solemn rite; at this age we are observant, and the im-




pressions received are singularly vivid and lasting, they remain to our dying hour. The effect left on Alfred's mind has not been set down by the historian, but other traits of his early youth are recorded, which shew him to have differed in many ways from ordinary children; it is also said that he retained an accurate recollection of the state of society and manners at Rome, and emulated its civilization in his care, in after years, to found schools and promote learning in England. There was a class of people in most countries, at that period, called singers or minstrels; it was their business to compose metrical tales, in which were handed down such heroic deeds or romantic legends as, in the absence of books, form the materials whence the historian gleans his information of the past.^a Alfred was very fond of these ballad-singers, and, by spending much of his time with them, became early acquainted with the most remarkable events which had happened in his native land. There is a story of his mother's having offered an ornamented manuscript, of which the first or initial letter was richly painted and gilt, and which contained some of these songs or poems, to whichever of her children could soonest learn its contents by heart; Alfred scarcely allowed himself to rest until he had won the prize. I do not know if this tale is true.^b It was the custom then to train royal children in every kind of field sport, with a view to making them active and bold. Alfred was enthusiastic in these exercises, but

^a "It is remarked of him that, in his boyhood, he was fond of the company of the sceapas or minstrels." Lingard. "It is an historical fact, which shall be afterwards established, that the 'bards of the isle of Britain' have continued in an unbroken succession down to the present day." *The Cymry*, page 45.

^b Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*. Vol. ii. page 238.

he preferred sometimes to leave his brothers to follow the chase alone, that he might occupy himself with other pursuits ; for his was a mind thirsting for something better than deer-slaying. Probably on an occasion like this he may have loved to dream away the day in devising those theories of which his brilliant deeds in after life were the fulfilment. We may fancy him alone on the merry green-sward, hunting the fields of thought, instead of the plains over which his brothers were scampering, perhaps stretched upon the grass near some placid stream, while his horse, with its trappings removed and the bridle loose upon its neck, grazed peacefully at his side. Here, for he was no dreamer in the genuine sense of the word, he may have first realized the knowledge how to build vessels, the principles of architecture and modelling, and such other useful arts as he afterwards practised to so good a purpose, when the Danes were subdued and the restoration of his country formed the main occupation of his time and thoughts. With this activity of mind he combined the strictest integrity of purpose and a remarkable tenderness of conscience ; he knew and valued those Divine precepts without which all the accomplishments of life are but as emptiness. There is on record an instance of the way in which religion actuated his conduct, and it proves him, notwithstanding his brilliant abilities, to have been humble and self-distrustful in a degree unusual in so young a man. When called upon, at the age of eighteen, to fight his brother's battles against the Danes, he was in constant fear lest the headstrong passions of youth, of which he felt the untamed power within him, should get the better of his virtuous



resolutions, and lead him into sin, and he would rise in the middle of the night, and, stealing into the nearest Church, pray earnestly to be kept from temptation; and he added a petition, that he might rather lose his health and suffer from an acute disease, than fall into the excesses in which others around him were plunged in the dissipated camp in which he was living. Nor did the support he sought for fail him; he was never known to exceed the bounds of temperance and modesty; "virtue was his sun,"^c Divine grace his mirror and shield. When therefore the shifting events of life placed him at the head of the government, not only by right of succession, but by the joint consent and joyful acclamation of the nobility, counsellors of state,^d and all the people, he was apparently well fitted for so honourable a post; nevertheless it was the will of Heaven to postpone his real elevation to a still distant period, and to educate him for it by a new and most trying discipline, and this was the school of adversity.

And now perhaps you are sufficiently interested in the young king to wonder that one amiable, religious, and gifted, as he was, needed to be tried by adversity. It is natural to the human mind to make such reflections, and although they sometimes foster a train of thought the unlimited indulgence of which is very dangerous, as leading to rash and indiscriminate conclusions far wide of the real truth, in Alfred's case they are easily set at rest. Much and justly as he is admired, and unbounded as is the praise bestowed upon him, there are not wanting some who have mentioned his faults as well as his

^c Herbert's poems.

^d "Witan," in Saxon parlance. This was A.D. 872.

virtues. And can we doubt that he had faults? The answer to this question is plain; the greatest saints are "compassed with infirmities;" far more imperfect must they be who, however amiable in the eyes of men, have not as yet yielded "body, soul, and spirit," a "living sacrifice," who prefer pleasure, even if innocent, to the call of duty, and their own will to the Divine Will. Alfred's faults were sufficiently grave to draw down upon him a stern and honest rebuke.* St. Neot more than once pointed out that he was indulging in his own peculiar pursuits, to the neglect of the interests of his people, and more than once was this reproof unheeded. He had at last recourse to harsher language, and he foretold, with grief, that Alfred was destined before long to reap the temporal punishment of his inertness, by finding himself an exile within his own kingdom. It was in the commencement of his reign that he suffered himself to fall into this forgetfulness of his duties. He had, no doubt, a great distaste for the crown, hampered as its possession was by dangers and responsibilities, but having once assumed the reins of government, and having been publicly consecrated

* "In the beginning of his reign, when he was yet young and inexperienced, such men of his kingdom as came to him, requiring assistance in their difficulties, and such as were oppressed by those in authority and demanded justice at his hands, he refused to listen to, or render them any assistance, but took no account of them at all. For this did that most blessed saint Neotus, his nearest kinsman, while yet alive in the flesh, grieve from the bottom of his heart, and his prophetic spirit foretold what must befall him for his misconduct."

"Thou seest, O king, what now thou sufferest from thine enemies, and thou shalt suffer more hereafter. For in thy kingdom thou art proud and tyrannical, whereas before the eyes of the Divine Majesty thou oughtest rather, with the king and prophet David, to have thrown thyself weak and humble. Therefore by a foreign nation, that knoweth not Christ, thou shalt be driven thence. Some thou shalt escape from those enemies, and shall be concealed under the hands of God, and so, for thy own sake thou shalt remain many days. Nevertheless I have obtained for thee, by my prayers, that if thou wilt turn from these iniquities, God will yet have mercy on thee and restore thee to thy state and empire." *Life of St. Neotus, Bishop of Exeter, p. 11.*

at Winchester as the lawful king of the realm, he ought not to have left his post unnecessarily.

The Danes commenced their provocations within a month of his brother Ethelred's death, and while he was engaged in preparing for the solemnities of his funeral. After a battle, of which the real result appears to be doubtful, he succeeded in bringing them to terms, and they agreed to quit the country. They only retired, however, to the next state, Mercia, over which Burrhed, Alfred's brother-in-law, was tributary king. Burrhed had married Ethelwolf's daughter. The Saxon annals mention nine battles as being fought this year, so that it is probable that before Alfred gave himself up to those habits of life which St. Neot thought calculated to injure his usefulness as a king, he imagined that the war was at an end, and he might hunt and hawk at pleasure ; hunting being one of the occupations in which he spent more time than was desirable. He doubtless thought it very tedious to be constantly called away to hear complaints or receive petitions, or on any of the numerous small occasions for which, in these times, a prince was summoned to pass judgment. But he was not altogether idle, for he also devoted himself to literary labours, as far as it was in his power, and I say this because, up to this moment, he could not read except in his service book and a small volume containing collects and prayers, which he always carried about his person. We have every reason, indeed, to believe, that Alfred's faults sprung more from an ardent temperament, and a want of self-control, than from anything essentially wrong in his intention. I have no idea how long this state of inaction continued ; it could

not be a great while, for the Danes were not in the mood to keep faith with him. On leaving Wessex, when their first treaty was concluded, they so distressed Burrhed, and overran Mercia, that, after a few unsuccessful struggles, he was glad to lay down the insignia of royalty and fly to Rome, where he ended his days as a private individual. During this period they also wasted and destroyed East Anglia and Northumbria, until there was nothing worth the having to be found in their whole extent, for they were almost uninhabited.^f They then returned south again, and many more of their number constantly arriving from abroad, they are fitly compared to a "swarm of locusts,^g" or to "ill weeds which the more you uproot them the faster they grow." In the year 875, Guthrum, a new Danish general, is named as crossing over with Osketul and Amund; Osketul must have gone back to Denmark and returned, for it is very clear that he was at the destruction of Croyland, which took place some years previously. Hinguar and Hubba likewise continued to be amongst the most active of the plunderers.

But Alfred was now alive to the danger of his position, and began to take the most determined measures to thwart his restless foes in their predatory attempts; and never was there a nobler, or, for the time, a more fruitless struggle than that of which I am now going to give you a brief and rapid sketch. After devastating Mercia and driving away Burrhed, the Danes placed a creature of their own, one Ceolwulph,^h a renegade

^f 873. This year the army went into Northumbria.

^g "Like locusts, saith Huntingdon." Spelman's *Life*, page 53. Also see Sir John Prise's *Hist. of Wales*, page 39.

^h "Ceolwulf, an unwise king's-thane." *Saxon Chronicle*.

Saxon, in charge of that province, and, wholly forgetful of their treaty with Alfred, rushed like a torrent into Wessex, filling Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall, and enacting, wherever they went, the same scenes of rapine and cruelty that had marked their progress in the north. The Wessex men, strongly attached to their king, made every effort to oppose them. Alfred turned his thoughts at first to the protection of the coast, well knowing that to maintain a successful contest with these people, he must prevent their being reinforced by fresh intruders. He, therefore, built a flotilla, to intercept the enemy's ships, and displayed considerable skill in the construction of his own boats—for ships then were no more than boats or barges; Alfred's were long and low, and propelled with oars instead of sails, and they obeyed the helm better than any that had before been built, which gave him a great advantage in his naval fights. They may be looked upon as our first naval armament. Besides this, he fortified the different sea ports as well as he could, and following the enemy into Dorsetshire, he arrived just after they had destroyed Wereham monastery and seized its strong castle. Here he compelled them to a fresh agreement, and, to give it the more force, he resolved that, infidels as they were, they should take a religious oath, and swear to the observance of their treaty upon the sacred relics of the Church.¹ He had an impression that as the infraction

¹ There are two accounts of this oath; some historians speaking of it as taken not upon the relics of the Church, but upon the "sacred bracelet," which was consecrated to Odin. It is so mentioned in a book called *Hist. Collections*, which purports to be translated from the *Saxon Annals*. I think it probable that the oath sworn was twofold, upon both the "relics" and the "bracelet," thus binding the Danes by all that each party considered holy. There was also a bracelet used in the ceremony of coronation at this period, as part of the insignia of royalty; it is spoken of in the "narrative

of so solemn an oath would be sacrilege, it would bring down a speedy judgment from Heaven upon them should they fail to observe it, whereas, if it acted upon their superstitious feelings, (for religion they had none) there was some hope of gaining them eventually to greater seriousness ; it was a step towards their conversion. But any hope of this nature was destined to be speedily frustrated. That very night numbers of the Danes, in defiance of the pledge they had given, started secretly for Exeter, on horseback,^k whether on their own horses or Alfred's I cannot quite make out, but they at once violated the conditions to which they had sworn, by seizing that city. Again Alfred followed them, and barricading them within the walls, so that they could not stir, obliged them to promise afresh to keep the treaty. And just now there did appear some chance for the English, for, after the attack upon Wereham castle, the Danish fleet had suffered shipwreck, many of the boats being cast away at Swanwich, on the Hampshire coast, others had fallen in the way of Alfred's flotilla, and had been taken and sunk by them ; and of six larger gallies that were arriving from Denmark with supplies, one was disabled and five had been chased

of the translation of the body of St. Cuthbert from Lindisfarne to Durham." See Dr. Giles's translation of Bede's works, vol. ii. page 194, in the appendix. See also, in connection, Spelman's Life, page 48.

^k "Part of the army which had horses." Saxon Annals, quoted in Hist. Collections ; but in Spelman's Life it is said, "they suddenly set upon the king's sea-horse, (which in their removals evermore marvellously annoyed them, and whose service was, therefore, in these multiplicities of invasions, of great use to the king), and putting the keepers and riders all to the sword, they served themselves of the horse, and presently fell down into Devonshire, and surprised Exeter upon the river Wiske, in one of the freshest parts of Alfred's dominions, whither, as to the rendezvous, they appoint their forces that yet remained at Wereham (Wareham) to repair." Spelman's Life, &c. page 49. "As they were marching towards Mercia, they met a body of English horse, who were riding in a careless manner, by reason of the treaty being concluded, and unexpectedly setting upon them, slew the greatest part of them." Rapin, quoting from Asser.

away. The Danes were thus cut off from retreat to their own country, and in several of the engagements that took place about this time they seem to have suffered defeat. But finding themselves baffled in one direction, they marched in another, and, driven from Devonshire, they next entered Wales, where, as they had neither conscience nor good faith, they continued to overrun the country ; some settled permanently in Mercia, others, collecting in great force, so as to be an overmatch for any army that Alfred could raise, fixed themselves at Chippenham, in Wiltshire. Many of his people, thinking resistance hopeless, and utterly wearied out, deserted to the enemy, others retired from the scene of danger, leaving Alfred, as St. Neot had predicted, a houseless wanderer. Humanly speaking his case was now desperate, and the people's favourite had no choice but to lay down his arms and hide himself from present danger in the woody fastnesses near the confluence of the rivers Tone and Parratt, in Somersetshire.

A few years before the Heptarchy had been a united and prosperous kingdom ; what a fearful change had passed over it ! Wessex, one state out of the seven, alone owned a nominal king, and that king lay concealed in a marsh, and soon was so entirely forgotten by his subjects that his estates became the common prey of the lawless. So dreary and deserted were other parts of the country that mention is made of the necessity the Danes were in to sow the land with corn in some districts, lest they themselves should perish from hunger. Churches, monasteries, schools, towns, villages, all had either disappeared or were in a ruined and desolate state, and

with the disappearance of the Churches and the dispersion of the clergy who officiated in them, social order and moral obligations seemed to have departed also. Everywhere unheard-of crimes disgraced the face of nature ; brawling, violence, and rapine stalked unshamed and unregarded. And this was England ! that fair land of promise, rich, but a few years before, in kings and saints, whose annals have been the delight of the pious of all subsequent periods.

But we will follow the footsteps of the stricken and afflicted Alfred ; and who does not love to visit, even in thought, the island of Athelney ? It lies, as I before said, between the Tone and Parratt, in a district now known for its fertility in bearing rich crops of grain. In looking across this tract, as it is at present, it would puzzle you to understand how any one could conceal himself there so as to escape all observation ; and, viewing it from the high ground to the south-west, there is little visible shelter through its whole extent ; its woods have been uprooted, its waters are dried up, and Athelney, no longer an island, is conspicuous at the distance of many miles, as the cherished spot where England's justly valued monarch waited in faith and patience for the removal of that mysterious cloud which had gathered round his career. Its appearance then was widely different.¹ It is described

¹ "This spot, which was anciently surrounded with almost impassable marshes and morasses, will be ever memorable for the retreat of king Alfred from the fury of the Danes, who, in tumultuous numbers, had overrun the eastern part of his dominions. The register of Athelney sets forth that Alfred, after having bravely encountered his enemies for nine successive years, was at length reduced to the necessity of fleeing from them, and taking refuge in the little isle of Athelney. The place that lodged him was a small cottage belonging to St. Athelwine, formerly an hermit here, the son of king Kynegils. After his emersion from this retirement and the total defeat of his enemies, he founded a monastery, for Benedictine monks, on the spot

as entirely surrounded by water, the whole adjacent country being composed of numerous smaller islands, covered with a thick growth of alders; between these ran narrow inlets in all directions, very intricate to traverse, except to those acquainted with them, and in the habit of making their way through the swamp in search of game, fish, or wild fowl; and these, also, were wholly under water, during most parts of the year. The mode of passing through these to Athelney was by

which had given him shelter, and dedicated the same to the honour of St. Saviour and St. Peter the Apostle, appointing John the first abbot, and endowing the establishment with the whole isle of Athelney, exempt from taxes and all other burdens, with common pasture and free ingress and egress in Stathmoor, Saltmoor, Haymoor, and Currymoor, and all other moors within his manor of North Curry. He likewise gave ten cassates or hides of land in Long Sutton, with all meadows, pastures, rivers, and all other appurtenances whatsoever, which benefactions were afterwards confirmed to the monks, and many others added thereto by different kings and nobles." "William of Malmesbury gives us a romantic account of this island and monastery. 'Athelney,' says he, 'is not an island of the sea, but is so inaccessible, on account of bogs and the inundations of the lakes, that it cannot be got to but in a boat. It has a very large wood of alders, which harbours stags, wild goats, and other beasts. The firm land, which is only two acres in breadth, contains a little monastery and dwellings for monks. Its founder was king Alfred, who, being driven over the country by the Danes, spent some time here in secure privacy. Here, in a dream, St. Cuthbert appeared to him, and, giving him assurance of restoration, he vowed that he would build a monastery to God. Accordingly, he erected a Church, moderate indeed as to size, but, as to method of construction, singular and novel, for four piers, driven into the ground, support the whole fabric, four circular chancels being drawn round it. The monks are few in number, and indigent, but they are sufficiently compensated for their poverty by the tranquillity of their lives, and their delight in solitude.'" William Malms. ap. Dugd. Mon. Angl. I. 202. Some allusion to the vision of St. Cuthbert, above-mentioned, is supposed to have been intended by a little curious amulet of enamel and gold, richly ornamented, that was found, in 1693, in Newton Park, at some distance northward from the abbey. On one side of it is a rude figure of a person sitting, crowned, and holding in each hand a sceptre, surmounted by a lily, which Dr. Hickes and other antiquaries have imagined to be designed for St. Cuthbert. The other side is filled by a large flower, and round the edge is the following legend: Aelred mec heit ge-vorcan; that is, Alfred ordered me to be made. This piece of antiquity is now in the Museum, at Oxford, accompanied with the accounts of doctors Hickes and Musgrave." Extracted from Collinson's Hist. of Somerset. I paid a visit, lately, to the isle of Athelney. There were no remains of the monastery whatsoever; a kind of pillar alone commemorates Alfred's residence there. Outside the rail which surrounds it a fragment of stone was lying, that had evidently been taken from a Church or religious building. Not far off is the large barrow, supposed to have been thrown up over the slain in some battle; the mound is certainly artificial, and has the ruins of a Church upon its highest point; the Church is dedicated to St. Michael. See also Collinson's Hist. of Somerset for an account of this barrow.

wading, or in boats, but on one side only, in the midst of summer, there was another way across the land, rather difficult to find.^m Here Alfred hid himself, after wandering about for a time in disguise, and it was while residing near this spot that the incident happened which all historians have recorded, of the scolding he received from the wife of one of his own neatherds, who, ignorant of his real rank, had placed him in charge of some cakes which were baking on the hearth, and when she found, on inspection, that the cakes were anything but what they ought to be, being, in fact, burnt to a coal, the tart old lady reproved him in no measured terms, maintaining that he knew how to eat them fast enough, although he was too idle to look after them.

When Alfred's enemies had almost lost sight of him, and his friends, a few faithful ones excepted, had forgotten him, he began to grow bolder in his expedients for retrieving his fortunes, and his natural energy of character prompted many methods to effect this, one of which was the converting of the small island of Athelney into a fort, or rather that part of it, about two acres of ground, which was sufficiently firm to bear being built upon. After he had accomplished this, with the aid of his retainers, he was able to make frequent sallies upon the enemy, retreating to Athelney when hard pressed, and, in these excursions, he generally got the better of them.

One day, while he sat alone, reading, a beggar presented himself before him, whom he relieved with part of the only loaf he had in the house. His party were gone out fishing, and would return hungry ; under these

^m "Hid by briars." Rapin.

circumstances, his wife naturally remonstrated with him for such ill-timed generosity. "How was more bread to be procured?" she said, "he was giving his all." Alfred's beautiful answer, "Thanks be to God who has thought me worthy of being visited in so remote a place by one as poor as myself,"^a may shew us the spirit in which poverty ought to be relieved, and how patiently a king could bear his necessities. Still, when his servants came back from fishing, and were making merry and rejoicing over their unusual success, Alfred felt the sounds of joy fall strangely upon his ear; his usually trusting and resigned spirit gave way, and he became very sad indeed. Probably he knew better than those around him how pressing was his need at this time, or news might have reached him that they were ignorant of. But, whatever was the cause of his distress, it did not prevent him from falling into that deep and quiet slumber which is, we are told, the especial heritage of the loved of heaven.^o Was it a dream or a real vision from which he received comfort? Probably the former; yet it must not be accounted a common dream, the result of the association of previous ideas acting on over-wrought sensibilities. Why should not the Almighty warn in dreams then, or now, as formerly? Be this, however, as it may, Alfred's dream had its fulfilment; we may not set it aside. That it came to pass is a sufficient reason for giving it in detail. Alfred, then, in his sleep, saw himself approached by a venerable man, having the appearance of a bishop; in his hand was a magnificent copy of the gospels, with clasps

^a From the "narrative" published with Bede's Works, vol. ii. and taken from the "Acta Sanctorum," Johan. Bollandi.

^o Psalm cxxvii. 3.

of gold, embossed with jewels.^p By this person, whom he believed to be St. Cuthbert, he was informed that his act of compassion on the preceding day had been pleasing to God, Who purposed to restore him his crown at no very distant period. He also received directions to cross the water, where he should be joined by five hundred armed adherents ready to aid in his undertaking.

Accordingly, he proceeded the next day to the appointed place, and, blowing a horn, was immediately surrounded by his friends, when they arranged their future plans and place of meeting. At this time the Danes were encamped not far off, and Alfred had the courage to disguise himself as a harper and go amongst them ; he remained with them three days undiscovered, and had every reason to be cheered by the state of disorder and carelessness in which they were living. This visit which he made them enabled him to contrive a mode of attack more likely to succeed than any which could otherwise have been suggested ; and his hopes were further raised by the news of a great victory, gained over the enemy by Oldune, earl of Devon, at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, in which the raven standard^q

^p Such a copy as is described here was written out, in honour of St. Cuthbert, by bishop Eadfrid, and adorned with jewels by his successor at Lindisfarne, Athilwald ; when the body of St. Cuthbert was removed, this manuscript is mentioned as among the articles of value then preserved. See Bede's Life of St. Cuthbert, chap. xlvii ; and the narrative before referred to of the translation of St. Cuthbert's relics, chap. ii. published in Bede's Works, vol. ii.

^q "Upon the ample folds of the standard which floated at the head of their host, was depicted the raven, the bird of Odin. The magic banner had been woven and worked, by the daughters of Regnar Lodebrok, in one noontide, and the Danes believed that their national ensign was endued with prophetic powers. If victory was to follow, the raven stood erect and soaring before the warriors ; but if a defeat was impending, the raven hung his head and drooped his wings." Palgrave's Anglo-Saxons, p. 114. Anlaf, a Dane by descent through his father, but a Saxon on his mother's side, had a raven upon his standard.

had been taken; an event sufficient in itself to discourage the Danes, and paralyse their exertions, since they believed it endowed with supernatural properties, and imagined that the raven, worked upon it by the three daughters of Lodebrock, always raised or lowered its wings during a battle, according as the fortune of the war would turn. More important to Alfred was the fact that in this engagement the redoubtable generals, Hinguar and Hubba, some say Halfdene also,^r with twelve hundred of the enemy, had been slain. Hubba, so long the scourge of the disheartened Saxons, was carried into Devonshire, and buried on a high hill, where a heap of stones was thrown up to mark the place of his interment.^s After Alfred had seen the state of the Danish camp he summoned a council of his friends, and chose for the place of meeting Brixton, on the borders of Selwood forest, in Wiltshire; it was a central spot, equally accessible to the inhabitants of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire. There he was received with much enthusiasm, and he afterwards marched in two days to Eddington, near Bridgewater, where, having made a speech to all the assembled forces, in which he tried to shew them how much depended upon their conduct, he led them to battle. They encountered the enemy, and the slaughter on the side of the Danes was so great as to drive them, panic-struck, to a castle hard by. Here Alfred besieged them and starved them out; in a fortnight they begged

^r This is a mistake; it will be seen, in the sequel, that he died a natural death.

^s "And when the Danes fond Hinguar and Hubba deid, thei bare theym to a mountayn ther bysyde, and made upon hym a logge, (logge is a "burning,") and lete call it Hubbslugh; and so ict is to this day in Debenshir." See note to Spelman's Life of Alfred.

for mercy on any terms, and he thus found himself in a condition to impose a treaty upon them with a much better chance of having it observed than at any former time ; indeed, the recent defeat of the Danes had been so complete that it might almost be said to have placed him again in possession of his kingdom. His way of bearing his elevation, and the mild merciful nature of his measures with the enemy, match well with his previous character, and yet I am half inclined to question their policy, and to think that had he treated the Danes with a little severity, his peace might have been more unbroken. As it was, he acted towards them rather as a father than a conqueror, forgetting and forgiving alike their barbarities, their implacable nature, and their utter want of good faith.

Some of the party, among whom was Rollo, afterwards duke of Normandy, he ordered out of England, when, instead of returning home, they carried terror and devastation into the heart of France, Italy, and the low countries ; but Guthrum, prince and general to another large body, threw himself on Alfred's mercy, and was allowed to remain and settle among the Saxons. As it appeared impossible to extirpate the Danes, Alfred required that they should become Christians, and live peaceably under his government. Guthrum making no hesitation to accede to this condition, king Alfred stood godfather to him, and he was publicly baptised at Wedmore,[†] thirty of his nobles joining him in receiving that

[†] Some historians say Westmer, or Westminster, but this is clearly a mistake. The Saxon annals state the baptism to have taken place at Aller, by Athelney, and that it was completed at Wedmore by the removal there of his "chrism," (a white linen cloth, worn on the head for eight days after baptism,) and the subsequent twelve days' entertainment to himself and his lords. That this "Wedmore" was Wedmore in Somersetshire, is, I think,

sacrament, and many of the common soldiers. Alfred gave him the name of Athelstan, and kept a twelve days' rejoicing in honour of the event, making him, at the same time, magnificent presents.

In consideration of this change in his position, the state of East-Anglia, now principally peopled by Danes, was assigned to him for a kingdom, on condition of his sworn fealty to Alfred, as reigning monarch. Indeed, nothing could be more considerate than the treatment he met with from his conqueror. No sooner had he been placed in this favourable situation than he was permitted to exercise the rights of a king, by joining Alfred in the framing of a code of laws for the mutual benefit of both parties, and, in the title of these laws, his own name was honourably coupled with Alfred's; they were called "*Fœdus Aluredi et Guthrumni*." They were drawn up hastily, on the emergency of the moment, but they provided for an entire equality between Danes and Saxons, insuring the safety of each when in the territory of the other, and defining the boundaries of the respective kingdoms." And now Alfred was, in a manner, released from the continued assaults of his inveterate enemies, although they did not cease from petty outbreaks; this state of comparative peace is said to have lasted eight years, some say twelve, but during the whole period it was necessary to use the utmost vigilance, and to adopt such precaution-

proved by the fact that the demesne, or island of Wedmore, was afterwards bequeathed by king Alfred to his son Edward, and was therefore part of his personal estate, on which he probably had a castle or residence. See "*Coll. Somerset*."

* The boundary of Guthrum's kingdom was as follows:—"Along the Thames, (from the mouth thereof,) to the river Lea, from thence to the head of Lea, thence straight to Bedford, and then down the Ouse to Watling Street, with which it meeteth at Huntingdon." *Spelman's Life of Alfred*.

ary measures as might place the event of another Danish war more under the control of the sovereign, or, if possible, ward it off altogether. What these measures were, and how far they answered the end proposed, shall be the subject of another lecture.

LECTURE XIV.

A.D. 879—900.

IN the foregoing lecture, Alfred's career, as a soldier, has been the main object of our consideration, and in all that we have seen of it, he has amply justified the impression of superiority which has been generally attached to him. Yet the waves of adversity are not the best tests of talent and prudence in governing ; courage, constancy, faith, generosity, patience, may thus be developed, and they are noble qualities ; they make a good man ; it takes more than these to make a good king. While the storms of life last, such virtues are to a man's character like the scattered lights on a disturbed sea, we cannot tell what form they will take, or whether they will become lasting reflections of the image of the Creator ; they may be but passing gleams, as unlikely to lead to permanent good as the phosphoric meteors of a marsh ; prosperity is the true criterion of steadfast virtue, for in prosperity the righteous man will tremble, and hedge himself in with duties, and bind good habits, like golden chains, upon his soul's liberty, while the lax, or unstable, sinks into inactivity and self-indulgence, which, by degrees, undermine the strength of character gained by trial ; and the wicked, who appeared for the moment to be reclaimed and purified, losing that fear of God's judgments which was the real secret of his virtue, will

“return to his vomit, as the sow to her wallowing in the mire.^a” And it is from this that the common saying arises, that men have “disappointed the expectations formed of them;” they were not necessarily hypocrites, they deceived themselves as well as us; they were, for the time, what circumstances made them; other circumstances would have had a widely different effect upon them; their evil nature was kept under, not subdued. No such disappointment is in store, as far as Alfred is concerned: his whole mind and character were in advance of the age he lived in; nor are his singular prudence, or the intelligent foresight of his regulations, to be accounted for on any other principle than that which makes the “fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom,^b” and teaches that to the “upright there ariseth light in the darkness.^c” And Alfred’s soul was unstained by crime, its whole bent, purpose, and energies governed by the law of his Maker; no vain system of philosophy, like those of the present day, had warped its perceptions, no tampering with forbidden pleasures had shipwrecked its purity. What wonder, then, that the emanations flowing from such a source bore the stamp of the wisdom which cannot err! I do not mean to say that the good are necessarily wise, and well-judging, but I do mean to say that where talent is united with holiness, and that not the result of a sudden change of character, but of an undeviating adherence to the voice of conscience, there, if anywhere, enlightened views will be found.

But as I have not yet given proof that Alfred was what I describe, I shall here make a digression from

^a 2 Peter ii. 22.

^b Proverbs i. 7.

the regular narrative to consider some of the laws for which he has been so much commended, and anything concerning himself or his arrangements which seems to fit into this part of his history ; for these regulations appear to have been set on foot as soon as he had any respite from continual fighting ; that is, in the period immediately following Guthrum's elevation to the throne of East-Anglia.

The laws of king Ina, of Wessex, and those of Withred, of Kent, acknowledge and enforce Christianity, but those of Alfred are framed quite on a Scriptural model ; he commences with the Decalogue, and then repeats many parts of the Mosaic civil and criminal law, such as the freedom of a Christian slave after six years service, the "eye for eye and tooth for tooth," the punishment for letting dangerous animals go free, or leaving open pits, if death occur in consequence, the law of mercy to strangers, widows, and fatherless children, the not keeping a man's only garment in pledge, the payment of tithes and first-fruits, the prohibition of swearing by heathen gods. After this he mentions the synod or council held by the Apostles at Jerusalem, and speaks of it as a kind of model for Christian nations, saying that the "holy bishops" and other "exalted witan" of the English race had, in like manner, met and decreed mercifully^d, that secular lords might admit of "money-bot" for the first offence in most kinds of crime, and that he had collected the laws of Ina, his kinsman, king Offa, of Mercia, and Ethelbert,

^c Psalm cxii. 4.

^d He seems to have meant that the laws about compensation in money were a mitigation of the Mosaic code, which he had made the foundation of his laws.

the first of English race who received baptism. "I, then, Alfred, king of the West-Saxons, shewed these to all my 'witan,' and they then said that it seemed good to them all to be holden." Then follow laws about oaths, the protection to be given by sanctuaries, the punishment or compensation for various crimes and injuries, the cases in which a man is allowed to fight, holidays, the damages for various wounds, and other particulars.

Amongst the most remarkable of the changes then introduced, was the arbitrary division of the whole country into counties, hundreds, and tythings. That there was some kind of parochial division before this is certain, to prove which I need only refer back to the history of the kingdom of Kent, and subsequently to the laws of Ina and Offa in Mercia and Wessex; and the very formation of dioceses, and estates, and the partitioning off of grants of land, would necessarily occasion a kind of division in the country. But it is to be remembered that the complete revolution from which the kingdom was now rising, may have, and indeed we are told had, swept away most of these boundaries, and where any were maintained, it was more by possession than prescription. Alfred's division was made by survey; but while it gave the authority of the law to existing rights, it would appear that his object was less the settling of boundaries than the immediate control of his subjects, whether Danes or Saxons, and the limiting of the power of the nobles, and making them rather the dispensers of the laws they lived under to the vassals and tenants on their property than mere lords of the soil, often more lawless than their dependents.

After, then, that the general survey of the country had been completed, Alfred appointed a count, or earl,* over each division, from whence such titles as earl of Devonshire, or earl of Surrey, have arisen, and a court where the causes belonging to each division were tried ; this is the origin of what are called county courts. In the absence of the count from his government, there was his deputy, or vice-count, to hear the causes brought into these courts, from whence our title viscount is doubtless taken. These vice-counts had a limited power, and were also called shire-reeves, from whence the title, sheriff, comes ;† they appointed other judges under them, who were required to attend the county courts at stated times. Besides this, families were classed in tens, or tythings, and each family in the ten to which it was attached was made answerable for the others, so far as being bound to oppose any rebellion against the laws of the land, and aid in delivering up offenders to justice. Again, these tens, or tythings, were counted up into hundreds, and for each hundred of families there was a smaller court, where their grievances, if not too complicated, might be redressed, but no one was ever to be tried for an offence by less than twelve of his peers, or twelve men qualified to sit in the smaller courts by their age, station, and character. This is the origin of that trial by jury for which our country has been so much praised. Over every tything one man presided, and every cause not determinable in the courts belonging to the hundreds was referred to

* Earl is a Danish title, and answers in rank to the Saxon earldorman ; count is from comes, comitis, in the Latin, a man of rank, or nobleman.

† Sullivan says that shires and sheriffs were mentioned before Alfred's time ; this is probable, but the establishing and confirming their boundaries and office is certainly his. See Sullivan's Feudal Law, chap. xxvi.

the county courts, and, finally, the discontented might appeal to the king for justice ; and so strictly did Alfred attend to such appeals, that he executed forty-four judges in one year for misconduct. Nor did Alfred's division stop here : even in the parishes of which the tythings were composed, he held fathers to be responsible for their children to the age of fourteen years, husbands for their wives, masters for their servants, and lords and owners of land for their tenants and slaves, and if a guest staid on a visit anywhere more than two nights, his entertainer was responsible for him likewise. I have not, in this description of the administration of the local, or county laws, said anything of the great annual courts or parliaments, where also many causes were tried that contained legal difficulties which were beyond the jurisdiction of the smaller courts, but only of Alfred's new regulations. I ought to mention how far the clergy were comprised in these : in causes connected with the affairs of the Church the bishop gave judgment, the count or sheriff supporting his authority, when needful, by the penalty of the law ; in felonies, and offences not ecclesiastical, the sheriff or count gave judgment, the bishop being present to back his power, where needful, by the censures of the Church ; in civil causes, or mere questions of rights, boundaries, &c., the jury pronounced judgment, the bishop and sheriff only presiding, and enforcing, where needful, the judgment so given. In this manner Alfred completely shackled the disaffected and vicious amongst his subjects, for laws "are not a terror to good works,"^s and the result was speedily observable throughout the kingdom. It

^s *Re-mans* xiii. 8.

may seem a little tedious to enter so closely into the minutiae of these legal enactments, but seeing that they are the foundation of that justice under which England has arisen to her present pitch of power, and of the civil government of which we still enjoy the benefits, it cannot be uninteresting ; Alfred's laws are the rudiments of our legislation, the mighty skeleton or framework of the realm, from the working of which all the other laws have derived their strength. Another interesting feature in the constitution, at this time, was the usage that prevailed in the parcelling out or dividing of landed property. In Alfred's first code, the "*Fœdus Aluredi et Guthrumni*," before alluded to, there was a clause forbidding the sale or exchange of man, horse, or ox, without a proper voucher or memorandum of sale, on the part of the seller. This shows us that slavery or villeinage still continued. Now, in disposing of estates, there were generally certain slaves who were considered to belong to the land, and changed owners with the land on which they worked, other villeins were not attached to the soil, but could be parted with at their owner's will or bidding ; the first of these classes was provided for upon the land or estate to which each one belonged. A lord, then, who had an estate, divided it usually into five parts ; the first whereof was his demesne, or pleasure ground, on which he kept his horses and the other cattle needed for his household ; this demesne was close to his castle. The other four parts were apportioned, one for military tenants to follow him to battle, and be ready to aid him in any service requiring an armed defence ; one for labourers on his demesne, or to render him corn and cattle at stated

periods ; one for his slaves or villeins, whose office it was to assist the other tenants and labourers, by felling timber, making enclosures, and such offices as were assigned to them by their lord at his pleasure ; and one part remained unenclosed, and was the waste, or common, on which the tenants and villeins had a common right of pasture, where the lord hunted game, and from whence all the timber was supplied, both for the use of the castle and the repair of the farms and cottages on the estate, including fire-bote or fuel for all, whether tenants or slaves. I need not say that the demesne and waste were much the larger of the divisions, for this will appear evident.^h Here we see the respective rights of lord and tenant strictly provided for, and by an arrangement which, if duly followed up, would make the owner of an estate the father of his people.

It must have been a strange thing to the wild and lawless spirits of those days, to find themselves living under Alfred's new laws, and not only suddenly cut off from their freebooting expeditions, but obliged to attend the sittings of courts, study legal difficulties, and see justice done to all. The king, however, was peremptory, and as firm in carrying out his enactments as in making them, and if an earl or count neglected his duty, he was speedily superseded in his privileges, and others enjoyed them in his room, so that the idle nobles, who had lived half their time in camp, were now fain to set to work to repair their deficient education ; the country became more like a colony of lawyersⁱ than anything else, and ludicrous indeed must have been the mistakes and dilemmas into which these new magistrates fell.

^h Sullivan's Feudal Law, p. 246.

ⁱ See Spelman's Life, p. 120.

This state of things brought before Alfred's mind the urgent necessity that had arisen for educating his people, for indeed the sad events of the last few years had swept learning completely out of the kingdom. I have fully described the melancholy condition of the provinces, so that it is unnecessary to do more than refer to it as a sufficient cause for the ignorance which prevailed. Yet half the writers of modern history imply that this ignorance was no new thing, as if they would have us believe it to be unconnected with the exterminating war from which the country had been suffering fifty years previously, and they are very fond of quoting a sentence from a letter of king Alfred's to bishop Wulfsig, in which he complains that when he ascended the throne scarcely an individual south of Thames could "understand the service in English, or translate a Latin epistle into their own language." But the first part of that letter tells a widely different tale :—"There was a time," it begins, "when foreigners sought wisdom and learning in this island; now we are compelled to seek them in foreign lands." Wulfsig was one of those bishops on whose co-operation with himself in the instruction of his people Alfred mainly depended. The plan which seemed most likely to forward his wishes in this respect, was to send a deputation to France, to ask of the Church there for a reinforcement of learned men to aid in the work of founding schools and such other measures as might be thought desirable. This deputation consisted of bishops, thanes, priests, and deacons, and I suppose the reason why the expedition was chiefly entrusted to the Church, was, that then the Church was the fountain-head of learning, which was fostered better

under the calm roofs of her monasteries than in the noisy halls of the chiefs and feudal barons ; and besides this, an old-fashioned way of thinking was very common, which amounted to a belief that nothing could be done well without the blessing of the Church. Men are strangely altered now, and yet, if we can read the signs of the times, there is fair reason to hope that before long they may go back to this good old way of thinking.

Alfred's expedition sailed in the year 883. Among the remarkable persons of that day was one Johannes Scotus, or Scotus Erigena ; he is sometimes called an Irishman, by birth, and, besides his other learning, he was a master of many languages, and much esteemed at the court of Charles the Bald ;^k he returned in the convoy ; as also Grimbold, a man of high attainments, who had first known king Alfred as a child, during his visit to Rome, when he passed by Rheims, where Grimbold then resided. Grimbold was likewise thoroughly acquainted with the ecclesiastical chant, and of exemplary piety. Those of the clergy in England who took part in the restoration of letters were Wulfsig, before mentioned, Asser Menevensis, (he became Alfred's instructor in the learned languages, and afterwards wrote his life) S. Neot, whose rough reproof had not injured him in the estimation of the clear-sighted and noble-minded king, Plegmond, archbishop of Canterbury, eminent for his skill in divinity,^l Athelstan, also called bishop of London, Werefrid and Werebert, bishops of Worcester and Leicester, and, later in the day, Dunwolf,

^k " A man of very sharp wit and of singular learning (for the time he lived in) both in arts and tongues, especially the Greek, the Chaldee, and the Arabic, for attaining of which he had spent many years both in Athens and other eastern parts." *Spelman's Life of Alfred*, p. 133.

^l *Collins*.

the very neat-herd who had sheltered Alfred at Athelney, and when his royal master, discovering him to possess considerable genius, would have him educated, his proficiency proved in proportion to the opinion formed of his talent. He was afterwards made bishop of Winchester.

It appears most probable that the University of Oxford was now first founded, notwithstanding the opinion which some maintain of its greater antiquity.^m Undoubtedly there was a school at Creglade, twenty miles off, long before Alfred's reign, and there may have been one at Oxford; but it is very doubtful whether any such schools had survived the late distresses. It is not unlikely, however, that the traditional fame of learning which attached to the spot, first caused Alfred to select it for his Universityⁿ in preference to another. This does not take the glory of the original foundation from him, or lessen the merit of it; new buildings had to be raised, professors provided, and funds to support them. While I am speaking of Oxford, I may as well notice the religious spirit in which all this was done. The three halls, where the different branches of learning and science were taught, were dedicated in honour of the blessed Trinity, and that "daily sacrifice of prayer and praise" which has survived all "chnges and chances," and still sanctifies its venerable walls, was at once made a part of the University statutes.

Here S. Neot and S. Grimbald became divinity

^m See the arguments in Spelman, Collier, Brian Twyne, &c.

ⁿ University College, the oldest in Oxford, still claims him as its founder, and adorns its rooms with his bust, regarding the endowment of the College, A.D. 1249, by William of Durham, as a revival of Alfred's work.

professors, John, a monk of St. Davids, taught logic, music, and arithmetic, and Asser was reader in grammar and rhetoric.^o

But Alfred's gratitude for his deliverance and restoration was not confined to mere popular actions such as I have described; his piety was a part of himself, and therefore it entered, as an essential, into the arrangements connected with his private life, and influenced the disposal of everything with which he had any concern. Those vows were not forgotten "which his lips had spoken when he was in trouble."^p It might have been an easy thing to vow, as he then did, a third of his whole time to God's service, for his present was unemployed, and the future apparently under his own disposal, but it was altogether different, and a very difficult undertaking, to keep such a vow, in the midst of the engagements of a crowded court, and the many responsibilities that must have pressed upon him, if we may judge from the number of schemes which he set afloat to ameliorate the condition of his people. And how did he meet this difficulty? His way of keeping his vow is one of the most beautiful points in his character. Eight hours in the twenty-four, if he was conscientious, were no longer his own; they were dedicated. This many would have made an excuse for doing little or nothing besides, instead of maintaining, as Alfred did, an unwearied struggle against the ever-varying forms of injustice, irreligion, ignorance and

^o Scotus Erigena does not appear to have been settled here, but in the school belonging to the monastery at Malmesbury, where a story exists of his having fallen a victim to the anger of his pupils, who, upon some difference between himself and them, started up and stabbed him with their pen-knives. Some historians doubt the authenticity of this anecdote, but I think there is very much to be said in favour of its truth.

^p Psalm lxi. 13, 14.

oppression, which always stamp such times of mental and moral darkness as those in which he was living. How few among ourselves, even wishing to act rightly, would have mastered the difficulty and curtailed the day one third, when the whole must have appeared far too short for half there was to do and to think of. Yet we do not find that Alfred's vow interfered with the performance of a single duty, either to his family or the state; power was given him to keep it faithfully and perseveringly, while few have excelled him even in the number or compass of his good actions. And now may I not suggest that it is perhaps to the fact of his having been under such an obligation that these actions may be referred; for it made the regulation of his time a religious duty, taught him method, and indeed compelled him to it. There is another thought, too, in connexion with this subject which faith cannot but glance at, although worldly reason may deride; it reminds us that time spent in prayer is gained instead of lost; we bring from our devotions an element of strength that makes difficulties vanish; or gives discernment to overcome them, buoyancy to meet their pressure, patience to grapple with them, peace in the midst of them.

While the fragrant breath of prayer encompasses the soul, the invisible world is with us, and its unseen agents fight for us; so do our devotions become the spring of our efforts, the sustenance of the soul under them, the medium through which they are blest. That this is not the experience of a monk, but of one of the most enlightened monarchs and wisest men England ever produced, let the life of Alfred be a standing proof. He laid out his day as follows:—he divided it into

three parts; eight were for sleep, recreation, and refreshment, eight for the affairs of his kingdom, eight for “contemplation, reading, and prayer.”^a

As there were then no clocks, he burned wax tapers to mark the flight of time; each of them lasted four hours, and when it was found that, on stormy days, they flared about and consumed in less than the regulated time, (which shews us that there were numerous draughts and currents of air in Alfred’s palace) he contrived a kind of stand to put them in, with pieces of thin horn to let the light through, which invention is supposed to be the origin of the lanthorns we still have in use. Glass had been introduced,^r but it was an expensive and scarce material, and so not often found, even in a king’s residence.

In other domestic arrangements Alfred was equally conscientious. Of his annual income we are told that he halved it, and then subdivided each half, in the following proportions:—the first half into four, of which one part maintained his two monasteries at Athelney and Shaftesbury, one his schools, one was divided amongst the poor, and one was given to the support of religious establishments generally, in England and elsewhere; the second half contained three portions only, dedicated to the salaries of his officers, the wages of his servants and workmen, and the demands of hospitality.

In speaking of his monasteries I must not forget to tell you that the one at Athelney owed its origin to

^a Baker. Collier says, “reading, writing, and prayer.”

^r “When the work was drawing to completion, he (Benedict Biscop) sent messengers to Gaul, to fetch makers of glass, who were at this time unknown in Britain, that they might glaze the windows of his Church, with the cloisters and dining rooms,” &c. From Bede’s Life of the Abbots of Weremouth and Jarrow. Giles’s Trans. Thus glass was known in the year A.D. 675, although not generally used until long after.

another of Alfred's vows, made while residing there. Immediately upon his restoration he sent a body of workmen to carry it into effect, and a church was built, in the cruciform style ; I suppose an unusual form for a religious structure at this period, although not wholly unknown, and afterwards much more common. It is described as being raised on four wooden pillars, possibly on account of the damp situation, or the difficulty of getting a good foundation, and it had four circular chancels. Unfortunately it was easier to build this monastery than to people it. In the confusion of the times numbers of the monks had married and thrown off all restraint, others had fallen victims to fire and sword, and few cared to avail themselves of such an opportunity for a return to strictness of life as the situation of Athelney would have afforded ; Alfred was obliged to send to the Continent before he could succeed in forming a brotherhood. This was not the case at his other religious establishment, for his own daughter Ethelgitha becoming its abbess, numbers of young ladies of distinguished rank emulated her example, and gave their youth and freedom to the service of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Ethelgitha had afterwards the consolation of offering a home to her widowed parent, and fostering in holiness the infant years of the young Eadburga, her niece, the child of her brother Edward, who devoted her to the cloister at the age of three years. It is said that he felt some scruples at thus disposing of his child without any choice of her own, and settled them by putting her into a room in which two of the corners were previously occupied, the one by toys and trinkets, the other by a chalice and a copy of the gospels. He

then placed himself at the door, to watch to which of the corners her steps would be guided, resolving to look upon her decision as the will of Heaven. The little girl ran eagerly to the quarter which contained the sacred book and chalice,^a and her father, clasping her in his arms, deeply affected, confirmed the dedication he had before made. Eadburga, thus early consigned to a life of seclusion, was looked upon rather with envy than pity ; in after years she is spoken of as remarkable for her “ piety and self-abasement.”

Besides his two monasteries Alfred bestowed much money and labour on restorations, re-building some of the large towns from the very foundation, and in every case replacing the ancient wooden tenements by substantial stone erections. London, so repaired, became again a city of considerable importance ; and to ensure its not suffering a fresh surprise, he made it over to Ethelred, who had married his daughter, constituting him earl of Mercia, of which state London had ever been called the capital. Ethelred proved a faithful ally to his father-in-law, ready on all occasions to come to his aid ; his position was more that of a sub-king than a nobleman.

The nobles and gentry generally followed Alfred's example of building with stone instead of timber, and the change in the country was soon as wonderful as it was rapid, all the arts receiving a fresh stimulus at the hands of the energetic king. Among other enterprises, one may be named as being half civil, half religious, in its purport ; it was the sending an expedition to India, to make an offering, on his part, at the shrine of S.

^a William of Malmesbury.

¹ Ibid. De gestis Pont. b. ii.

Thomas, who received the crown of martyrdom near Madras, and where there was then a branch of the Church still flourishing. Bishop Sigelin accompanied this expedition, and a great sensation was excited on the return of the ships, for they brought back a freight of precious stones, gums, balms, and other Indian curiosities. The jewels so obtained called into being a new set of artizans, viz. goldsmiths, who worked under the immediate superintendence of the king himself, from whose taste many of their designs originated. This voyage was made by way of the Red Sea, the party on board the vessels crossing the isthmus of Suez, and obtaining other ships to prosecute their voyage. They followed, in fact, our present overland route.

Alfred's attainments as a scholar must next be spoken of. It is singular that, with all his desire to educate his subjects, he should not have commenced by studying himself what he would have others to acquire; but his humility and the number of his occupations may have caused him to think a higher degree of learning than he already possessed beyond his reach. Asser Menevensis first urged him to study the Latin language, being tired of the many extracts and translations which he had continually to prepare for Alfred's hand-book; which was a selection of those passages which he liked, taken from various authors, and which he always carried about with him. On attempting, in obedience to Asser's suggestion, to make himself master of one favourite passage, and succeeding beyond his expectations, he was so delighted that he began to learn in good earnest, and before long was not a scholar alone

but also an author.* Even here we cannot help admiring his character more than his talents. What use did he make of his attainments? He was unwearied in labouring to give his people the possession of the knowledge of which he could so well appreciate the value; he could not make them all learned, he would then translate into the Saxon tongue some of the treasures which formed his own solace and delight. And he left to posterity all the Psalter in Saxon, portions of the Old and New Testament, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, so full of local interest, Boetius's Consolations of Philosophy, S. Gregory's Pastoral, and other works. Some original compositions are also said to be his, as, for instance, a book of proverbs or wise sayings, and there was his book of Dooms or Laws, of the collection of which he says, in the preface, "I Alfred, the king, gathered them together, and commanded many of those to be written which our forefathers held, those which to me seemed good, and many of those which to me seemed not good I rejected, by the counsel of my witan, for I durst not venture to set down much of my own." His book of meditations, probably the hand-book before alluded to, also outlived him.

I wish I could give you a more detailed account of his domestic life, it would be full of interest; but I cannot find that his children are mentioned, except incidentally, and I can hardly fancy that he had time to see much of them. A pretty anecdote is on record of his admiration of a grandson, with whose conduct and attainments he was so much pleased that he knighted him; giving him, what must have been a great prize to

* Asser's Life of Alfred, p. 76. Giles's Trans.

a young child, a scarlet coat, a jewelled belt, and a sword with a golden scabbard. It will be seen in the sequel that he fulfilled the hopes of his grandfather, whom in person he is said greatly to have resembled. But the most remarkable among Alfred's children was his daughter Ethelfleda,^{*} who was married, as I said before, to the earl of Mercia. She appears to have inherited the bold spirit of her father, and is even said to have signalised her courage at the head of a band of soldiers. It were better no doubt for a princess, under ordinary circumstances, to cultivate the more quiet and retiring virtues, which are woman's proper province and should be her choice; but such times as those may have called for an extraordinary effort, and when Providence gives such a call, the meekest and most subdued character will not be the last to answer it.

His elder brother Edmond dying young, Edward was the next heir to the crown of England; the discussion of his character will be better deferred. Ethelwerd, another son, was placed at Oxford by his father; he devoted himself eventually to literary pursuits, and we hear little more of him. Ethelgitha, abbess of Malmesbury, I have before spoken of; and a sixth child, Elfrida,[†] a daughter, became the wife of Baldwin, earl

^{*} "She was a lady of so exalted a spirit, that she was by many called king Ethelfleda; and it was believed that, if she had enjoyed a longer life, she would have raised her glory for practising heroical exploits above the most famous men of her age. Her prudence in counsel was equal to her courage in execution, and in all regards, considering her many virtues and graces, she was a daughter worthy of such a father as king Alfred, a sister worthy of such a brother as king Edward, and a wife worthy of such a husband as duke Ethelred." Cressy. Ingulphus calls her "a prudent virago." William of Malmesbury "the delight of Edward's subjects . . . the dread of his enemies . . . a woman of an enlarged soul." See also Roger Hoveden's character of Ethelfleda; and Henry Huntingdon, and Roger de Wendover, or Matt. Westmins.

[†] Elfrida was married to Baldwin, second count of Flanders, and became the parent of Mathildes, mother to William the Conqueror.

of Flanders. We must now return to the narrative of events in Alfred's reign, from which this whole chapter has been a digression, and trace it to its brilliant and satisfactory close.

LECTURE XV.

A.D. 889—900.


THE REIGN OF ALFRED CONTINUED.

IF, in summing up the subject of the preceding lecture, we reckon the number and comprehensiveness of king Alfred's measures for the renovation of his kingdom, it will seem scarcely possible that these could have been carried on at the same time with mutiny, tumults, invasions, and revolt; nor indeed is such a statement quite consistent with the real fact; and yet the years following the battle of Eddington, and the elevation of Guthrum the Dane to the throne of East Anglia, were years of only comparative peace. In no part of that period was Alfred free from collision with his old enemy in some form or another; the Danes were conquered, not subdued; nothing short of extermination would have rendered them altogether quiet. Rollo, it is true, had left the country, Guthrum had settled down in apparent submissiveness, others among the Danish chieftains had paid the debt of nature, as Halfdene, whom disease rendered an object of abhorrence to his army, and who, attempting to escape to Denmark with a few stragglers, perished at sea;* and Hinguar and Hubba, who fell in a battle. But there was likewise a

* Narrative of the translation of St. Cuthbert's relics, published in the second volume of Bede's works.

formidable ruffian, called Hastings, round whose banner the discontented Danes ranged themselves, and he was for long a thorn in Alfred's side, and a rallying point to the enemy.

Nothing but the promptness and skill with which the aggressors were met and checked, could have saved the country, and the immediate and beneficial working of Alfred's prudent and far-sighted laws, among his own people, proved a great advantage to him in his military operations. This will easily be conceived if we remember what those laws were, and how the king was himself the moving spring of them ; so that if anything went wrong he was at once acquainted with it. But, in addition to the laws which bound every thane or noble to be in readiness, at the royal bidding, for service, either in the civil courts or in the field, there were provisions made for the training of all able-bodied men, everywhere, to act as militia, when called upon, and regular detachments of these were drafted off as occasion required ; the rule being, that only a certain number served at the same time ; so that enough remained at home for the purposes of defence, and to keep the ground cultivated. By this means there was no inequality anywhere through the country in the state of the population ; every quarter was guarded, and had its own military corps. The wisdom of this dividing of the people is self-evident, and Alfred even extended it to the palace ; his officers of state and servants were apportioned into three bodies, who filled their places by rotation, none remaining at court more than a month at a time, one month in place and two at home being the order in which they usually served. What care does



this shew for their comfort, and for the due observance of those domestic relations which are so frequently broken up upon the pretext of a false necessity. I think you must now have a very clear idea of the nature of his government.

It was in 879 that Guthrum was raised to the throne of East Anglia and Northumbria, which latter state fell naturally under his rule, as it was now a complete colony of Danes. His conduct, as regards his treaty with Alfred, was anything but satisfactory. Too weak to rebel himself, he is accused of having secretly fostered the rebellion of others, and once Alfred found it necessary to send a fleet into one of his harbours to destroy a number of Danish craft which had been allowed to assemble there. Hastings continued in England for full two years after Guthrum's promotion, connived at by his wily countryman, and perhaps receiving support privately at his hands. His way was to remain quite passive for a time, and then appear unexpectedly at the head of bands of the disaffected, when they would fall upon the Saxons, surprising and carrying the outworks of the different towns, and plundering in all directions. Alfred at last succeeded in driving him also from the country, when large numbers of the rebels following in his train overran Flanders and the north of France; and so great was the destruction that attended their progress through those countries, that in a few years no less than nine hundred religious houses had been entirely swept away or reduced to ruins.^b This flight of

^b "He destroyed the monastery of St. Quintin, another at Sevrès, burnt Rouen, destroyed the monastery of St. Florence, at Paris, overran and destroyed Nantes, and all the county of Anjou and Poitou, the towns of Tours and Orleans, Poitiers, and Saintes, Angoulême, Périgord, Limoges, Auvergne, Vivron, and ravaged Aquitania."

Hastings to the continent gave Alfred the first moment of rest that he had ever enjoyed from the Danish outbreaks ; nor was his peace materially interrupted until the year 886, a few insignificant skirmishes with detached bodies, who crossed the water in search of adventures, or rose up in the provinces, being the only disturbances that occurred ; one of these he quelled by himself embarking with the fleet, when he put to flight several of the enemy's ships, and beat them quite away from the coast. So much for his prowess by sea, and in the conduct of maritime affairs. This took place in 882.

The following year, exactly four after Guthrum's baptism, the government of Northumberland underwent a revolution, without either war or tumult ; it came to pass as follows :—The inhabitants, either dissatisfied with Guthrum's rule, or wearied at the disorders around them, took upon themselves to select a king. The person on whom they fixed was, by birth, a Dane,^c and of the blood royal, but, by education, a Saxon, having been early carried off from his home and sold as a slave in England. At this time he was the property of an old widow woman, which fact becoming known to Eadred, late abbot of Lindisfarne, this good man, acting, it is said, by the Divine intimation, proposed to the people that he should be elected as their sovereign,—a proposal which was eagerly grasped at both by Saxons and Danes. He was therefore solemnly crowned at Oswydown,^d and Alfred, hearing of the transaction,

^c Son of Hardicanute, king of Lethra, in Sweden. See Palgrave's *Anglo-Saxons*.

^d The hill of Oswy. "Invested with the golden bracelets." See Palgrave, and the narrative before referred to.

was pleased to give it his sanction ; and having received the promise of faithful allegiance from the new king, he ratified the appointment. Guthrum, therefore, was obliged, for the future, to confine himself to the East Angles. This election was, in all respects, a happy one, Guthred, (for so was this young man called,) proving a benefactor to the Church,^e and true to every pledge which he had taken ; the summary of his character, given us by an old historian, being, that “ with devout humility he submitted himself to Him who from a slave had made him a king.”

The year 886 was a turbulent one, giving Alfred much to do ; it was in this year that he set his son-in-law, Ethelred, over Mercia. Numerous petty invasions were made by the enemy, who, unable to get a footing, as formerly, in the interior, turned their attempts into a sort of piratical warfare on the coasts, landing and carrying off booty. Alfred became at last convinced that it was necessary to make these people hear reason by a different method from any he had hitherto employed ; he therefore hung up a number of the leading pirates, as examples to the rest ; it was a lesson they did not soon forget, and it affected them more than all his previous acts of clemency. Guthrum died in 890, neither esteemed nor regretted, although it would seem that his inactivity had kept the Danes from rebelling,

^e He restored the ancient endowment of Lindisfarne, viz. the land between the Tyne and Wear rivers, and gave the bishop of Durham royal jurisdiction between Tyne and Tees, from which grant arose the palatinate rights possessed by the see of Durham, until the last vacancy. They consisted in a claim to all forfeited property within the diocese, such property reverting, not to the crown, but to the bishop ; and the bishop might also act as judge within a certain boundary, passing sentence or reversing it, in the manner a king would do, from which sentence there was no appeal to the crown. Alfred gave this grant his full and entire sanction.

^f See the narrative of the translation of St. Cuthbert, before referred to.

for after his death they began again to shew symptoms of disaffection. This obliged Alfred to go into the provinces of Northumberland and East Anglia in person, and as the decease of Guthred took place almost at the same time with Guthrum's, Alfred annexed both provinces to the crown, taking pledges of the Danes who had settled in them, that they would keep the peace. He was not able to undertake this journey until 893. At the very time that he was engaged in it, the country was suddenly inundated with an immense body of the enemy from abroad, and so unexpectedly did this irruption happen, that it seems doubtful if the greatest precaution on his part could have prevented it. Here was a source of fresh trouble to Alfred, and it called for the exercise, on his part, both of prudence and military skill. The Danes who now landed were in two bodies, one of which was commanded by the same formidable Hastings who had so long been a terror to France. His detachment arrived in eighty ships, and the others in two hundred and fifty, making, in all, three hundred and thirty sail, which started from the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer together, but parted company afterwards, Hastings steering for the mouth of the Thames, while the others surprised an old fort at Appledore, in Kent, and there entrenched themselves. It would be almost as difficult as it is unnecessary to go one by one through each several action then fought; it is sufficient to give the most curious incidents connected with the war, and they are as characteristic of Alfred's great mind, firmness, and originality of character, as his most ardent admirers could wish. His promptitude in forestalling the designs of the enemy was something.

marvellous, and his expedients most ingenious ; no great general of the present day could have outdone him. He sometimes attacked the Danes at two or three points at once ; and near Appledore, taking them one day at disadvantage, he got them between him and the river, so that he fairly drove them into it at a place where it was not fordable. His own army, at this moment, was but a handful, as compared to theirs, and yet he succeeded in rescuing a large prey of cattle that they had seized. In one of these engagements Hastings, surprised and discomfited, fell upon the expedient that had served his turn elsewhere,^s and, by way of getting breathing time to help himself out of his difficulties, he proposed a treaty of peace, and that, as one of its conditions, his children should be baptized. Alfred, always thinking and hoping the best, and never slighting the interests of religion, took him at his word, and, when the two young boys were brought to the font,

^s " Upon this Hastings and his Danes departed from England, and made their way for France, where, laying siege to the city of Limoges, and despairing of a speedy surrender of it, he betook himself to his usual way of dealing sinistrously, and devised this trick to win the town : he feigned himself to be dangerously sick, and sent to the bishop and consul of the city, desiring of them most earnestly that he might be admitted to the Christian faith, and be baptized, before his departure out of this world. The bishop and consul, suspecting no deceit, were very glad not only to be delivered from the present danger of being besieged, but also to win so great a person to the congregation of Christ. Whereupon, a firm peace being concluded betwixt both nations, Hastings is baptised, the bishop and consul being his god-fathers ; which being ended, he was carried back by his soldiers to his ships, in a very infirm condition, as he outwardly pretended. About midnight he caused himself, with his arms about him, to be laid on a bier, and commanded his soldiers to carry their weapons with them under their coats, and so to be ready when he should give them the word. The next day, all things being in readiness, he was solemnly brought by his soldiers, with great clamor and counterfeit mourning, to be interred in the chief Church of the city, where the bishop and consul, accompanied by all the most honourable members of the town, came to honour the funeral. But when the bishop had made himself ready to bury the body, and all the citizens being in the Church, up starts Hastings, with his sword drawn, and killing first the bishop and the consul, afterwards fell in with his armed soldiers upon the naked [unarmed] people, putting all to the sword, and sparing neither age, sex, nor infirmity." Quoted in Sir John Prise's Hist. of Wales, from *Matt. of Westminster*.

he and his noble son-in-law, Ethelred, undertook the office of godfather to them, and afterwards, instead of detaining them as hostages, as he might have done, he sent them back to Hastings, laden with gifts and favours. It is needless to add that the father's piety was a feint; he forthwith fortified himself at Beamflete, by the side of the river, sending out foraging parties from time to time to plunder all they could lay hands upon; this was not to be borne, and Alfred speedily battered Beamflete about his ears, taking his wife and sons prisoners for the second time.

Meanwhile the East-Anglians and Northumbrians, almost all of them Danes, rose as a man; they commenced a treasonable correspondence with Hastings, and, with the hope revived of once again becoming their own masters, they laughed at their promises of submission to Alfred, and set themselves to organize the means of carrying on their opposition in good earnest. Under this idea they manned a fleet of two hundred and forty ships, and, embarking in them in large numbers, they sailed to Exeter and besieged the city. Here Alfred followed and attacked them, and he executed his march westward with such promptitude, that the Danes raised the siege and took flight in all directions, some crossing the country towards Wales, others making for Essex with the fleet. Alfred, retracing his steps to London, first set the sons of Hastings at liberty, alleging that he did this not from any necessity, or regard for their father's feelings, but because, as they were now Christians, he would treat them as brethren, and he then gave Hastings a peremptory command to quit England altogether,—a command

which, as it was in his power now to enforce, for the enemy was giving way and retreating on every side, Hastings thought it prudent to obey, and so departed. Still large hordes of the barbarians, for they were little better, continued to infest the provinces, some settling themselves in Gloucestershire, but the largest body remained at Shobury, on the Thames ; those in Gloucestershire the king's army^b undertook to dislodge by starving them out ; which they accomplished so well that the Danes were obliged at last to eat their horses, and were reduced to the most miserable condition. The others were the victims of one of the cleverest stratagems that is on record, and I have no doubt it will amuse you to hear of it :—As Alfred was riding along the river bank, early one morning, surveying the state of the defences, and making arrangements to protect the standing corn from the plundering Danes, it occurred to him that if he could by any means intercept the course of the stream, it would not only prevent the escape of the ships then lying in the mouth of the river, but interrupt all communication between the different bands of Danes located in the neighbourhood and their foreign allies. It was a bold thought ; the difficulty was how to carry it into effect. This difficulty, however, did not dishearten the king ; upon examination, it was found that by cutting away the embankment in one particular quarter, the stream would be impelled into a new channel, and the Danish fleet left dry in the bed of the river. The event fully answered the expectation of the king ; the river parted into three separate

^b Under the command of Ethelred, Athelm, and Athelnoth, all earls of counties. See *Spelman*.

streams, and the ships were soon aground, to the extreme astonishment of their masters. Such measures taught the Danes that England was no longer the place for them ; it was under wise laws, and governed by a king who knew how to maintain them ; thieves and robbers could thrive there no longer, nor was there any sure footing to be gained except by honesty and good fellowship. They therefore desisted, for the time, from all attempts at further conquest ; those who had settled in the land became peaceable and industrious, the disaffected dropt away, a few at a time, to the opposite coast, and the "land had rest."

Alfred only survived to enjoy this happy change for three years. Never strong, and energetic beyond the strength he had, a long life was, in his case, hardly to be hoped for ; he sickened and fell asleep in the bosom of the Divine mercy, about the year 901, in the fifty-second year of his age, and the twenty-ninth of his reign.

Not only did he leave his country in peace, as regards the Danes, but in good odour with its foreign relations. The title of "Great" was awarded to him, as well on the continent as in England, and shortly before his death the principalities in Wales yielded him a willing homage ; all owned the justice of his rule, all revered, all valued him. Justly indeed has he been called "Great," but there is another title attributed to him, in a book of proverbs that goes by his name, that I love far better—it speaks of him as "England's comfort." Who would not sacrifice their dreams of glory to deserve from posterity such an endearing appellation ?

~~In our point~~ of view Alfred stands in remarkable

contrast to the Saxon kings who preceded him ; his religion was a more active principle, leading him to strong resistance to the evil around him, rather than to avoidance of it by embracing the monastic life ; he remained in the world and in the exercise of his regal dignity, he never sought to leave it. I would not be supposed to side wholly in favour of either choice ; I am convinced that, as extreme or difficult external circumstances exercise an influence on us the force of which it is not easy to calculate, so also the internal structure of the mind varies to a degree which renders it impossible for one to judge for another. Can we question its being a beautiful and holy thing to give up all for God, friends, position, wealth, grandeur, luxuries, comforts ? to “ become a fool,” to use St. Paul’s language, that we may be “ wise unto salvation.” Such a sacrifice is like the track of the morning star upon the wave, not the less glorious because few are awake to gaze upon its radiance. But it may be holier so to act without leaving the world, to exchange the idea of a life of prayer for one of soul-galling activity, and this because it seems the lot He whom we love has chosen for us, and we would forsake all choice of our own, making His will ours, and waiting for our rest until He calls us to it ; this may be a higher aim, a more perfect sacrifice ! And such a resolve will be, in fact, a separation from the world ; the solemnity of the thought, if we are conscientious, purifying our desires, and sanctifying our efforts : and for an example of the manner of carrying it out, where can we better look than to king Alfred ? Who so weaned from earthly pleasures, honours, vanities, although living in the midst of them ?

who more entirely offered himself, and all that he had, a “living sacrifice?” It was not rank that ennobled him, it was humility; it was prayer, not intellect, that gave him strength to overcome difficulties; it was obedience to the teaching of the Church, not natural courage and hardihood, that braced his energies to the conflict. Many have called him “great,” few have taken pains to examine whence his greatness was derived. His own words are the best key to the secret, from his Proverbs at the Sifford Conference, taken out of Spelman’s Life :—

“Would you love the Lord your God,
He would guide you well;
How to walk worthily in the world,
Yet live in union with Him.”
Wise were the sayings of king Alfred.¹

“I warn you, my friend,
Be ye rich or be ye poor,

¹ Perhaps the sense of these sayings of Alfred is better given in a few rude verses :—

To Sifford came many thanes,
For the king a court did call;
And bishops and knights, with their awful trains,
Assembled one and all.
Then Alfred, to England dear,
Did these holy proverbs say,
The man who had never a thought of fear,
Though he feared the Lord alway.
“Would you love your Lord and Head,
He would teach you all His will,
He doth in honour this wide earth tread
Who in Him is living still.
Long for Him; O my friend,
Mildly I warn you here,
To make His glory your chiefest end,
And never forsake His fear.
Mildly I warn you now,
Seek him in every thing;
The crown sits not well on that monarch’s brow,
Who owns not a Higher King.
He is God and man also,
Good the highest good above,
Bliss above blessedness he shall know,
Who the Lord of Life doth love.

To fear the Lord Christ ;
Love and delight in Him ;
He is the God above all Gods,
The bliss above all blessedness.
A mild master and tender father
Is the Father and Comforter of all ;
He is man as well as God,
The great and wise king ;
All shall serve His will,
There shall nothing fail of it.”
Wise were the sayings of king Alfred.

He doth all orders sway,
And the king by Him must reign,
The priest bear rule by His perfect way,
And wisely the knight and thane.”
To Sifford came many thanes,
Where the king his “witan” met ;
And bishops and knights, with their warlike trains,
Were in solemn conclave set.
Then Alfred, to England dear,
Did his parting blessing give,
His brow was calm and his eye was clear,
Though he looked not long to live.
For his eye afar did rest,
Where his soul is resting now,
And holy faith was the crown that prest
That stedfast monarch’s brow.
He was England’s noblest son,
He is England’s comfort styled,
O well hath king Alfred this title won
From each loyal English child.

LECTURE XVI.

A.D. 501—928.

THE REIGN OF EDWARD THE ELDER.

WHEN a bright light fades from the horizon the whole atmosphere appears darkened ; it may be that it is not a very intense darkness, perhaps the sky is still cloudless, but a sensible change has taken place, and what under other circumstances might be considered a cheerful brightness, now bears a character of gloom. We must expect a feeling akin to this in leaving the track of Alfred's glory to enter upon the reign of his son Edward. We cannot soon forget " England's comfort," or transfer our affection to one very inferior in many respects to his illustrious parent. Yet Edward was a wise and good king ; at any other moment his career would have been considered most brilliant ; even now it is not without interest. He had been well trained in the art of governing by his father, he was, at an early period of his life, present at the great counsels of his country, as we find from his name having been introduced into Alfred's second code of laws,^a drawn up

^a Called the " *Fœdus Edwardi et Guthrumni* : " of which an old writer says—

" King Alureds the lawes of Troye and Brute
Lawes Moluntaynes, and Mercians congregate,
With Danyshes lawes that were well constitute,
And Grekyshes als, (also) well made and approbate,
In English tongue he did them all translate ;

many years before his death. He was successful against the Danes ; he put down, with much spirit, a rebellion stirred up by his cousin Ethelwerd, a son of Ethelbert, who pretended to the crown. He emulated his father in founding a University ; he received allegiance in a formal manner from the most powerful chiefs of the surrounding states, from Sithric, Nigel, and Reginald, who had assumed a species of sovereignty in Northumbria and the East-Angles, and who were all of them Danes, by their wild lawless nature, as well as by descent ; from the king of Scotland, from the king of Stræcled, (a part of Galloway, peopled from Wales) and from Howel, Edwal Cledwy, and Jeothwell, three of the princes of North Wales.^b

Nor were these latter triumphs accomplished without bloodshed. It was very early in his reign that his cousin started the pretensions to which we have alluded, and which he soon found were likely to be supported not only by the disaffected generally, but by all the Danes in the country. As usual anything seemed better to these unruly people than acquiescence in the existing order of things ; with no character to lose, no associa-

Which yet be called the lawes of Alurede,
At Westmynstyre remembered yet indeed."

Quoted from Spelman's Life, p. 96.

This description of their origin is either traditional or suppositious. Ethelbert is the first Saxon king who gave a body of laws to his people ; he may have collected those then in force, but there is no direct authority to prove that he did. The tradition of the Trojan descent of the British has already been mentioned in a note, and is too vague to be relied on. On the above subject Geoffry of Monmouth has the following remark :—" But if any one is curious to know all that he decreed concerning them, let him read the Molmutine laws, which Gildas the historian translated from British into Latin, and king Alfred into English." See Giles's Translation of Geoffry of Monmouth, p. 46.

^b "Then the king of Scots and the whole nation of the Scots, chose him for their father and lord ; Reginald also, and his son Eadulf, and all that dwelt in Northumberland, the English, the Danes, the Normans, all the Streacled Welch, and their king." From the Saxon Annals. Historical Collec. p. 322.

tions to violate, and no principles to maintain, it mattered little to them whose rights were infringed upon, provided they came in for a share of the spoil. In the present instance many battles were fought, and the rebellion was not quelled until the year 907; although it was in a bloody fight as early as 905 that Edward's rash cousin paid the penalty of his presuming.* This man went under the name of the "Clito Ethelwerd." "Clito" seems to have been equivalent to king's eldest son at this period. His title to the throne, however, was not a clear one, for the crown of England had not been made hereditary, as we have seen, both by his grandfather Ethelwolf's will and the voice of the country, whose election of Ethelred first and afterwards of his brother Alfred, in preference to the other members of the royal family, was held to be decisive. And we find that this custom of election continued among the Saxon kings; for Edward's, like that of his ancestors, was confirmed by a meeting of thanes and nobles, quite independently of the ceremony of coronation, which had been performed previously by Plegmond, archbishop of Canterbury, at Kingston-upon-Thames. Afterwards the nobles met at the same place, and

* Ann. 905. "Ethelwerd enticed the army, which was among the East English into sedition; insomuch that they plundered the whole country of the Mercians, till they came to Creglade, (in Wiltshire), where they passed the Thames, took all they could lay hands on in the neighbourhood of Braden, and returned home." "King Edward followed them as soon as ever he could get his army together: he laid waste all the country between the river Ouse and the ditch, which was the boundary of S. Edmond's kingdom, to the northern fens. Intending to retire from thence, he commanded that his whole army should march out; but the Kentish men would stay behind, though he sent his orders to them by seven messengers. There the Danes surrounded and fought them; many of the king's most noble captains were slain. On the Danish side were killed their king Eorick, the clito Ethelwerd, who drew him into sedition, and Biresig, the son of the clito Beornoth, with innumerable others. There was great slaughter on both sides; the Danes lost most men, but were masters of the field of battle." From the Sax. Ann. quoted in Hist. Coll.

solemnly invested the new king with the regalia, consisting of the diadem and the royal jewels, which had been collected and set in the previous reign, under the direction of Alfred himself. Edward received great assistance against Ethelwerd both from his brother-in-law Ethelred, and from that martial wife of his to whom reference has been already made. The former was ever in the field with all the forces he could collect, acting in the full authority of sub-king of Mercia, although this title was not bestowed upon him until just before his death, when he was invested with a higher rank than that of earl or earldorman.^d When that event took place, which was in the year 912, Ethelfleda succeeded him in the government of Mercia, ceding only the towns of London and Oxford to the king her brother, which, for some reason, he took possession of, although he allowed her undisturbed authority over the province. During the interval between this and her death she employed her energies in the first place in the repair of towns that had been laid waste in the war, and the building of castles and fortifications ; in this manner Warwick, Tamworth, Wedenbury, Charbury, Eadbury, Chester, Stafford, Bridgenorth, Runkhorne and Scargate,^e became places of strength and import-

^d "Then it was that Ethelred, who had all along bravely seconded the king, his brother-in-law, became in reality earl of Mercia ; but was not long so. He was taken out of the world by death, almost as soon as that whole province was united under his government. This earl was not barely governor or viceroy of Mercia ; he had some particular power, the nature of which it is very difficult to learn from the historians that speak of it. Malmesbury says he held the country as a fief of the crown, much in the same manner as the German princes held their territories of the empire. Of this Ethelfleda's cession to the king, her brother, of the cities of London and Oxford, is a further proof." Rapin.

^e Cities built, repaired, or fortified by Ethelfleda :—Cherbury, Wedbury, Runcorn, Fadesbury, Wareham, Tamworth, Stamford, Strengate, Bridgenorth, Chester, Warwick, Stafford, Litchfield, Shrewsbury, Eadbury, Brimsbury, Derby. She also built a monastery at Gloucester, and had the bones of S. Oswald removed there, and was there buried.

ance ; then she carried her arms into Wales, and took Brecknock, compelling the inhabitants of West Wales to pay her a yearly tribute. The cause of this expedition was the following circumstance :—Hyanus, lord of West Wales, had seized the moment of Edward's troubles with the Danes to make an inroad into England, his spirited sister could not sit still and look on while the interests of her brother were suffering, so she forthwith raised an army, and not only drove Hyanus from the field, but made his wife and thirty of his principal men prisoners. There appears to have been great cordiality between Ethelfleda and Edward, and when she died, which happened shortly after, he grieved most sincerely for her loss, but he would not let her daughter inherit her dignity ; taking Mercia away from her, he annexed it to the crown of England. This action of his has given great offence to some, who attribute it to a mean jealousy of the growing importance of that state. It originated, far more probably, from the unfitness of Elswina for her position ; indeed it is hinted that she was on the eve of marriage with Reginald the Dane, one of her uncle's greatest enemies. If so, she gave Edward cause for an interference which was, after all, but a using of the natural prerogative of the crown of England at that period ; neither precedent nor policy were in favour of her reigning. Edward had also another right over Elswina, that of guardian, which he claimed through the immediate appointment of her mother, and exercised in a much more decided way than could have been agreeable to the young lady's feelings ; he stopped her marriage, and took her home with him to his own dominions ; we hear no more of

her afterwards. One event in this reign is without any certain proof: it is said that the pope excommunicated Edward, because seven bishoprics were lying vacant, (an arbitrary act, if true,^f) and that Plegmond, archbishop of Canterbury, went to Rome to get the censure removed. There is evidence both for and against the authenticity of this statement, although it cannot be really of great importance in controversy, when it is admitted that England then highly revered the authority of the Roman see, and that the popes had begun to deal with a very high hand with princes. It is, however, a well ascertained fact that seven new bishops were appointed about this time, and three new sees created, a most wise and beneficial measure, from whatever cause it proceeded. The bishops elected were Fridestow to Winchester, Werestan to Sherburn, Kenulph to Worcester, Beornoc to Selsey, in Sussex, Eadulf to Crediton, Athelm to Wells, and Athelstan to Petrocstow, now Padstow.

Edward's principal conquests have been mentioned; of his private actions there is little remaining, except the founding of the University of Cambridge. Whatever opinions may have arisen as to the existence of a College there before his time, and they are much on a par with the disputes about Oxford, there could have been but few vestiges of it at the end of the Danish war; and Edward as clearly deserves the credit of founding it as did his father, Alfred, that of instituting its learned sister of Oxford. And now it only remains to us to sum up what we know of his character. As a

^f Malmesbury says he *threatened* to excommunicate only. The extent of the papal power at this time is best seen in the Life of Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, under Charles the Bald and Charles the Fat.

man and as a Christian it is difficult to pronounce judgment upon him ; as a king he is undoubtedly great, though very inferior to his father.

To confirm the latter assertion, I ought to draw your attention to the incessant disturbances which distracted the whole of this reign, all of which were promptly and energetically quelled. But we must also take into consideration how ably the noble earl of Mercia seconded his brother-in-law, how his widow supplied the gap caused by his death, by her own spirit and bravery, and the assistance Edward derived from his son Athelstan, whose judicious conduct, when in command of the army in the north of England, deserves to be recorded : he defeated, in this campaign, not only the Danish leaders, but Malcolm, son to Constantine III., who had imprudently taken their side. I have not attempted to describe the engagements that took place in the order in which they occur, but the most important results bearing upon them have all been narrated. The battle at Bury, when Ethelwerd fell, appears to have been the most bloody both for the Danes and the royalists ; then Eadwald, the king's thane, abbot Earnwolf, the earls Sigulf and Sighelin, with others of distinction, were slain.^s Afterwards a party of fresh invaders from Brittany carried off Cumuleac, bishop of Hereford, but he was ransomed by Edward for forty pounds, a large sum in those days. At a battle at Sherwood, in 920, against Welchmen, Danes, and Irish, Edward must have been defeated, but for the timely arrival of Athelstan with fresh forces. In this engagement the Danish leader, Leoffred, was taken prisoner, and Griffith, one

^s See note c. p. 270.

of the Welch princes, slain. Edward thought it necessary to make a public example of these rebels ; he therefore caused Leoffred to be beheaded, and his head, with that of Griffith, placed on the tower at Chester. His conduct on this occasion is questionable ; it was a harsh act to put one to death who had, as Leoffred, surrendered himself to his power ; but it might have been considered a necessary measure, and justifiable on this ground ; we cannot rightly calculate the merits of the case. A similar act, either of cruelty or summary justice, (I will not take upon me to determine which,) shortly after extinguished, for the time, the turbulent spirit of the factious Danes : when the forts of Thamesford and Colchester were taken by the royalists, the whole of the people within them were put to the sword. I am now come to a fact which sullies Edward's glory far more than anything I have hitherto said of him. There is a tale extant of an improper connexion formed by him, according to which three of his elder children would be illegitimate. The fact that the noble Athelstan was one of those, has inclined some to deny or gloss over the illegitimacy ; but there is no setting it aside ; it is a foul blot on an otherwise fair character. Generally speaking, he seems to have acted with prudence and kindness in his domestic relations ; the education of both sons and daughters was carefully attended to, and they received every advantage which it was in the power of their father to procure for them. The latter especially were not only accomplished, but their minds were likewise highly cultivated, so that many among the rich and powerful aspired to their alliance. Among these were Charles the Simple, father

of Lewis D'Outre-mer, Hugh the Great, count of Paris, father of Hugh Capet, Otho, emperor of Germany, and Louis the Blind, king of Provence, all of whom married daughters of Edward, and the two remaining sisters took religious vows; one was afterwards abbess of Ramsey. There were likewise two more daughters, sisters to Edmond and Edred, children by a second marriage: one is said by some to have married Lewis, prince of Aquitaine, (but historians are not very clear on this point,) and one became a nun.

I have spoken of the daughters first, contrary to the usual rule, because the fate of three of the sons is so intimately connected with the next reign that it seems better that there should be as short an interval as possible in the relation. It will therefore be only necessary to say of these that, at the time of Edward's death, two children by the first marriage survived, Elsward and Edwin. Elsward died within a few days of his father, at Oxford: of Edwin we shall speak hereafter. Edmond and Edred, the children of the second marriage, were mere infants, and so not capable of taking the government upon them.^b The duration of this reign was twenty-four years; it ended in 925. It is a remarkable fact that, before its conclusion, Charles the Simple, of France, had ceded Neustria to the Dane Rollo, who thus became duke of Normandy, and the founder of that succession which afterwards undermined the Saxon in our country.

^b According to Sir John Prise's History of Wales, they, in their father's lifetime, were in command of a detachment of the royal army, on the occasion of the taking of Chester. It is also stated there that Leoffred was made prisoner by Athelstan's own hand, and Griffith slain by Edmond and Edred. But if Edmond was only eighteen years of age when he came to the throne, as will be seen hereafter, and Athelstan reigned sixteen years, neither he nor his younger brother could have commanded in the siege of Chester.

ATHELSTAN.

ATHELSTAN, the next English monarch, appears to have succeeded, without opposition, to his father's honours, although not his legitimate son. Born in Alfred's lifetime, he is the promising child who was knighted by his grandfather, and this partiality of his illustrious ancestor probably led to his election to reign. It has been seen that Elsward, the real heir, died, nor was this the only instance of failure in the royal line. The late king had, in his visions for the future, fixed on his son Alfred, a young prince of much promise, to be his successor, while, to impress his people fully with his intention, he had him publicly crowned with himself; but Alfred, the only namesake, among the royal children, of his grandfather, had, many years before, been called to another inheritance, far from the broils of civil power and the reach of earthly ills. Edward's next son in succession, by his lawful wife, was too young for the exalted and difficult duties which now devolved on the king of England, at the time when his father died; so Athelm, archbishop of Canterbury, placed the crown on Athelstan's brow in the year 925, and a public synod of earls and thanes confirmed the appointment.

It is agreed on all hands that never was there an abler prince; he was judicious and wise in governing, affable and gentle in his manners, prudent in his regulations, and in all respects but one illustrious. It is a grief to be obliged to lessen this impression of his virtues, nevertheless it cannot be concealed that there

remains upon the memory of Athelstan a stain which the lengthened tread of succeeding ages is powerless to cover over or obliterate, that rivers of tears could not wash away. The facts of this tragedy, if not coming first in his reign, are yet so connected with the earliest event of it, that the two seem to belong to one another. From what reason I know not, the care of his early education was committed to his uncle, earl Ethelred ; we may surmise that it arose from his having no son of his own, and so intending to adopt his nephew ; but however this may be, he thoroughly did his duty by him, bringing him forward, at a tender age, at the public councils, and giving him every opportunity of acquiring both knowledge and experience ; thus fitting him for those difficulties to which his subsequent life speedily introduced him. Athelstan, being in this manner prepared to command, and already before his father's removal distinguished in the field of battle, was not unwelcome to the people, and his ascent to the throne was therefore almost without opposition, the stain on his birth being his only blemish. Soon afterwards, however, a noble of the court, named Alfred, raised an insurrection, by insisting strongly on this blemish, and proposing to put his brother Edwin in his place. It does not appear that Edwin took any part in the mutinous project. The author of the mischief, having been detected and arrested, was carried to Rome, to receive sentence from pope John X., where, swearing to his innocence before the altar, in S. Peter's Church, he suddenly fell down speechless, which naturally gave rise to the belief that his soul was perjured, a view which seems confirmed by the very fact of the insur-

rection. His estates were, therefore, confiscated, and dedicated by king Athelstan to the use of the monastery at Malmesbury, and as he died three days after, there was also a question raised about giving him Christian burial; this the pope referred to Athelstan's decision, who mildly requested that his punishment might not be carried beyond this life. It would have been well if the king had, with this closing scene, dismissed all further thought about the conspiracy, but, alas, it was far otherwise. Still he was apparently satisfied, and indeed the multitude of affairs which required his interference, among which we may mention a general revolt of the Danes in Northumbria, gave him little opportunity for the indulgence of vague suspicions. But what revived all his uneasiness was an assertion made privately to him by his cup-bearer that his brother Edwin had been far more guilty than was supposed, and had taken a very active part in the insurrection. Poor Edwin! he maintained his innocence in vain; his guilt was at once believed, and he was cruelly banished from his country. It is the circumstances of his banishment which tell most against Athelstan; he was forced on board a boat without oars or sail, and made to tempt the wild sea, with no one to manage his little fragile vessel, it is said not even a rudder to steer it, a page being his only companion. The weather proved very stormy, and the united emotions of anguish and fear soon broke his young heart; unable to endure his sufferings, he threw himself into the raging waves and perished. The page escaped, and landed on the coast of Picardy, and the news of his brother's fate soon reached Athelstan; with it the conviction came that he was his brother's mur-

derer ! Plunged into the deepest grief, he immediately caused minute inquiries to be made into all the circumstances of the conspiracy, with the view perhaps of relieving his conscience from the fearful weight that had come upon it. Had they elicited any facts that criminated Edwin, they might have had the effect of calming, in some measure, his remorse ; as it was, the result only forced its sting still more sharply into his bosom ; all that transpired tended to confirm the innocence of the young prince. What a terrible thing is suspicion—how awful in its consequences !

Year after year Athelstan bore about with him a heavy heart ; seven of vigorous penance, willingly submitted to, prove the sincerity of his grief. I wish we had been told what this penance was, but it may not have been well known.¹ The gorgeousness of the royal robe and the costly under garment often concealed, in those days, the hard and coarse sackcloth which chafed the tender limbs of the penitent, while the bed that had never been slept on was the only witness that the interval of night was not allowed to come between him and his punishment. It is a sign of a shallow mind to laugh at such outward penances, and to call them, not an expiation, but a compensation for crime, as though they removed the inward sense of it, and so were easily borne ; the hardened rarely submit to them, and if the tears of the real penitent become brightened and calmed as the rays of Divine consolation beam one by one upon his sufferings, (and this alone enables him to support them,)

¹ Part of his penance is said to have been imprisonment at Langport, in Somersetshire. Looking out one day from the place of his confinement, he saw the Church of Michelney in ruins, "whereupon he vowed" to "raise it to a magnificent height as soon as he should be free." Cressy. See also Camden in Somersetshire.

those very rays, by their Divinity, bring into stronger relief the dark and hateful cause of his calamity, and its foulness in the sight of that God Whom he has offended. How, then, can penance change remorse into innocence? That it did not in Athelstan's case we shall hereafter have evidence.

But we must now go back to the earlier events of the reign, for several of these are placed between the beginning and ending of the sad catastrophe on which we have been dwelling.

The Danes of Northumberland had taken advantage of the death of Edward to elect for themselves a leader, and they fixed upon Sithric; before long the whole province was in revolt, and this became Athelstan's first annoyance, after the affair of the seditious noble had been disposed of. To march into the province and himself put a check on Sithric's audacity was a politic and well-devised measure, and the result of this expedition was the following negociation:—Athelstan promised his sister Edith to Sithric in marriage, on condition that he should receive holy baptism, and govern Northumbria in strict vassalage to his royal brother-in-law. Apostasy first, and death shortly after, put an end to a treaty which had begun well, and Sithric's widow, offering up her wounded heart to Heaven, passed the close of her life in peace, retiring into the nunnery of Polesworth, in Warwickshire. In this crisis Athelstan, finding the faith of the Danes not any more to be depended on than formerly, claimed at once the full sovereignty of Northumbria, refusing to suffer another subking to raise against him a counter authority in his own dominions. To effect this, he made a second forced

march into the north with a large army, for Anlaff and Godfried, Sithric's sons by a first marriage, were disposed to seize what they could of their father's dominions and maintain them sword in hand. So prompt, however, were the movements of the royal army that they became panic-struck and fled; Anlaff retiring to Ireland to brew fresh mischief, Godfried to the court of Constantine, king of Scotland. Athelstan required the latter monarch to deliver him up as prisoner, but this Constantine secretly determined not to do, although he was not strong enough to offer open resistance; he therefore contrived the escape of his guest. We cannot blame him for it.

Before Athelstan left the north he had a personal interview with Constantine, at which Eugenius, a prince who exercised some kind of sway in Cumberland, and is elsewhere called its king, was also present. This meeting took place at Dacre, in that county, and it was one of submission on the part of the Scottish king, but it is denied that he did homage for his crown, as some assert. Godfried, after unsuccessfully making a party more than once against Athelstan, wisely gave up all hope of reigning: he led an idle piratical life for a while, then, sending in his allegiance, he was received to pardon and handsomely pensioned. Not so Anlaff; who continued to be a source of anxiety for many years afterwards.

In 928 was held the famous synod of Graetly; I am sure you will be interested in some of its provisions. I have said enough in the way of description to enable you to picture to yourselves, in a degree, the state of England. The country was now fast recovering from

the effects of those dreadful ravages which preceded the reign of Alfred, and indeed filled up much of the earlier part of it; here and there, at no very remote intervals, were to be seen well wooded demesnes, and Churches, some of wood and some of stone, were beginning again to peep out from amongst the trees, in the neighbourhoods where these demesnes were situated. Earls and thanes rode about with bands of armed attendants, and heavy stone erections, more like keeps than habitable residences,^k crowned the hills near the Churches, or, in numerous instances, were built close beside them, perhaps within the walls of an old Roman fortification, or in some other strong natural position. Wood and water were essential features in the choice of a home then, when land carriage was difficult, or almost impossible, on account of the state of the roads; and this necessity must have added beauty of appearance to a house of this period, where the heavy cold walls of which it was constructed almost forbade the idea. I should have called the roads rather tracks than thoroughfares; such as had been left by the Romans were noble

^k "Dudley Castle, mentioned in Domesday book, is a fine specimen, as the ground plan shews, of an Anglo-Saxon castle. . . . The keep is built upon the highest ground; and inside of an ample connected circuit are placed the various necessary buildings. . . . Coningsborough, in Yorkshire, . . . once belonging to Harold, and a royal British city, Mr. King thinks a fine specimen of an Anglo-Saxon keep. . . . It is a lofty round tower, divided and strengthened by six great square buttresses, so expanded as to give greater strength to the base. The ascent to the door, a great height from the bottom, is direct, by a steep flight of stone steps, as at Dudley. The floor is on a level with the door, and in the middle is a hole, opening into a noisome dungeon, of vast depth; at the bottom is a well. Above were two other floors, to each a fire-place, and the chimney-pieces, supported by capitals, yet remain. A gallery within the wall runs round the building. Buttresses are not deemed parts of Anglo-Saxon architecture; but as the baldness of the blank wall is unsightly, and buttresses might preserve the strength should the wall set, so these might have been additions of Earl Warren. Corfe and Sturminster were unquestionably Anglo-Saxon palaces; and the keep of the former is called Edgar's tower." From Fosbroke's *Encyclopædia of Antiquities*.

monuments of their civilization, and they formed the main intersections of the country from north to south, but such as communicated with these were very bad indeed for long after the period of which we are treating. The great Roman road, or fossway, may still be seen in parts of Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, and elsewhere ; it will easily be known by its straightness, and by its being raised in the middle, and flanked on either side with deep ditches or drains. It is astonishing that, fond as our ancestors were of imitating the Romans, they did not follow their example in this respect, and so increase the means of communication through the country generally ; but perhaps the state of danger to which the unsettled times gave rise, made them fearful of too great a facility of access to their strong-holds. I mention these particulars with the view of showing you what an event a synod must have been in those days, bringing as it did large companies of nobles, knights, and clergy from every part of the kingdom to one spot, where provision and accommodation were to be prepared, not only for themselves, but for their numerous retainers and attendants, as well as the animals on which they rode, or which followed their train to carry the baggage ; all of which were to be provided during the whole sitting of the assembly. The clergy, taking rank as spiritual lords, both by law, and in the estimation of the people, would not, on such an occasion, be without the trappings of their dignity, however they might humble themselves, as the strict and holy still continued to do, under ordinary circumstances : the lords and thanes doubtless attached great importance not only to the number of their retainers but to their

accoutrements and military appearance ; for a certain number of armed men well mounted and ready to do the king service, was esteemed a sign of rank, and gave precedence in council ; they would then vie with each other to make the most of such advantages as they possessed. A description of a council in Alfred's reign is to the point. It begins : " there sate at Sifford many thanes, many bishops, many learned men, wise earls and awful knights." We may fancy the arriving of these different parties at the destined place, the winding of their long trains through the forest glades, the clanging of the horns, the floating of the standards in the air, and the excited bearing of the leaders. And what a contrast to this must have been the grave processions of the clergy, with crosses carried before them, and chanted prayers sending up their sweet incense into the far Heavens overhead from hundreds of united voices at once.

The place of meeting took its chief character from the presence of a Church, often a Cathedral, to which a monastic establishment was generally appended ; it was not in every case in one of the large towns, although more frequently so than the reverse. We may imagine this Church, not rising gracefully as the later religious structures do, crowned by a multitude of pinnacles, flying buttresses, and embattled or perforated parapets, but heavy and massive, with small narrow windows, flanked by rude pillars, and very far apart from each other, low round-headed doorways, and cumbersome looking aisles, with a thick broad depressed tower in the centre of the whole pile. I have seen such a Church¹ which had three

¹ Church of St. Sampson, Guernsey.

divisions, I cannot call them aisles, and the arches by which these communicated with one another appeared to have been knocked out of the solid wall after the building was completed, instead of being part of the original design. The date of this Church is 1111, somewhat later it is true than the time in question, but its character of rudeness and severe simplicity mark it for as apt an illustration of what I was telling you as could be desired, and I should think it not improbably an older structure than the date usually ascribed to it would imply. It is remarkable how impressive such structures are, notwithstanding their rude proportions : they seem as if built to convey the first mysteries of faith to an unenlightened population ; the One awful God in three Persons, the One great Sacrifice, the One Baptism for the remission of sins. All these are embodied singly and simply, as in the Creed, for the time was not yet ripe for a fuller shadowing out by the stones of the visible temple of that glorious edifice “ whose builder and maker is God.” In such a Church, when any great public assembly of the nation was to be held, watchings and prayers preceded, for many days, its solemnities ; and, while it continued, services were constantly said, and the holy mysteries celebrated, while the whole legislating body assisted at them. After the synod, greetings, feastings, and games, were the order of the day ; and if the serenity of these social joys was occasionally marred by private animosities, and the secret jealousies of those who would rival each other in their sovereign’s good opinion, or the excesses of the lawless, on the whole much good remained after the dispersing took place ; religious impressions had been

fostered, abuses had been redressed, friends and relations had met, noble hearts had found an outlet to their sympathies, the poor had been fed, the Church enriched by offerings, the young had seen their future compeers, and all had been gratified by the presence of the "father of the land," the reigning monarch. Thus a new stimulus to fresh efforts for their Church, their king, and their country, had been given to all.

What a blank must the disappearance of the last train of horses have left on the minds of the residents of the soil! how still it must have seemed after such a whirl of excitement! We who live in excitement until we are no longer capable of being excited, cannot realize it. I do not know who were present at the synod of Graetly besides archbishop Wulfhelm, but all the nobility were there. Its principal provisions were as follows:—Every considerable man holding office under the king was to maintain and clothe at least one poor man; this might be at the king's charge, if he so pleased, but it was his duty to see that he was properly fed and had a suit of new clothes once a year. And each public officer, or person of this description, was to free one of his own slaves, under pain of a heavy penalty.^k

Only one kind of money was to be current through the realm, and no one was to coin without licence. There were to be seven mints at Canterbury, four for the king, two for the archbishop, and one for the abbot of S. Augustine; London was to have eight, and Rochester three.

The bishop's standard was to regulate all weights

^k Collier's Eccles. Hist. vol. 1, p. 411.

and measures. No one was to buy or sell on a Sunday. A fresh adjudication was made of the fine or penalty called "weregild," which fine was paid for the life of any one who had died by violence. It varied in amount according to the rank of the person slain ; and I shall mention the variation, by way of shewing you how the clergy were classed. For the death of a king thirty thousand thrismas was the sum assigned, fifteen thousand for an archbishop and duke, or prince, eight thousand for a bishop, alderman, and earl, two thousand for a mass-priest, and the smaller thanes. Spelman supposes a thrisma the third of a shilling, and that this fine was payable in cases of manslaughter, such as death in brawls or quarrels, or through the carelessness of the guilty party ; not for actual wilful murder, which was punishable by life as well as estate. A further regulation was made at Graetly of the mode of trial by ordeal, which has been described to you before, and which was still a prevailing custom among the Anglo-Saxons.

These and many provisions, which are more minute than interesting, were enacted ; and then there was a great haranguing or admonishing of every one present in the assembly. Bishops were charged not to fail to attend the courts of law on all occasions when it lay in their power ; the mass thanes or priests were cautioned always to certify the behaviour of a penitent to the bishop within thirty days after the penance had been appointed ; thanes not to misuse or oppress their slaves ; the rich not to tyrannise over the poor ; magistrates to be active and diligent in executing the law, on pain of deprivation.

Four smaller councils were convened in Athelstan's reign, at Exeter, Feversham, Munderfield and London, but they had to do exclusively with state affairs.

It may be as well to defer the remainder of this reign to another lecture.

LECTURE XVII.

A.D. 925—945

THE REIGN OF ATHELSTAN CONTINUED.

It was shortly after the synod of Graetly that Athelstan, going into Wales, subdued and quieted the turbulent people in that quarter. They had been instigated to an irruption by Constantine of Scotland, who, wishing to draw off the strength of England in that direction, that he might be free to attack the north, even supplied them with troops, in order to foster their ill-advised scheme. It soon met its punishment, however; Howel Dha, the most famed of the Welsh princes, being thoroughly routed, and he only released his kingdom by consenting to pay a yearly tribute of 2500 head of cattle,* twenty pounds weight in gold, three hundred in silver, and a supply of hawks and hounds at the king's pleasure, to the crown of England. Then Athelstan turned his steps north, and caused Constantine to shake on his throne. Reaching the borders of Scotland before Anlaff, with whom he was in communication, could join him with the intended supply of troops, Constantine was not even in a condition to defend himself, and immediately sent in his submission to Athelstan, whose generous nature would not allow him to punish such


* Collier says 5000 head of cattle; Rapin 25,000; Prise only 200 head of cattle; Baker 2,500.

treachery as it deserved, and he restored him all the towns he had taken. Rapin gives the year 934 as the date of this transaction.

As far as appearances went the country was now again tranquil ; and it was in this period of ease and prosperity that the melancholy circumstance took place which we have elsewhere recorded, and which so deeply sullied a career hitherto as unblemished and glorious as the first burst of the young leaves in an early spring. Is it not true, alas, of all of us that we fall not when trial is sharpest or temptation sorest, but when the smile of Heaven is upon us, and we are sunning ourselves in calm visions of peace and purity ? So it is that pleasure becomes softness, softness indolence, and indolence sin ; for it draws our thoughts and feelings into a sensual medium, unnerves our powers, and then passion rises, and self-command is wrecked, and in a shorter moment than we can imagine, a moment which we neither feared, nor believed in, nor prepared against, the peace of the soul is gone for ever. I have heard of one who exclaimed, “ open my heart when I am dead, and you will find that moment burned into it.” This was in allusion to a time of intense mental excitement ; and it will illustrate an anecdote concerning Athelstan, which is told of him as occurring long after his poor brother's untimely end. He was sitting at table apparently calm and happy, and the accuser of his brother waited behind his chair, in his office of cup-bearer. On this occasion he was very nearly falling down, through the slipping of one of his feet ; recovering himself by a dexterous spring on the remaining foot, “ see, he said, how one brother helps another.” These words went

straight to the wounded conscience of the sensitive monarch ; “ could he forget how one brother had helped another ? ” And who had dared to make such an allusion before him ? We do not know enough of the cup-bearer to judge how far the stab was intended, but the agitation into which the king was thrown was not of a transient nature, and the man paid with his life the penalty of his rash and ill-timed remark. That he deserved to die for his false accusations against the young prince there is no doubt, and why he had not been punished before it is difficult to say ; but perhaps sufficient proof had not been obtained of his guilt at that time, and this trifling incident may have led to its further development.

To return to Constantine. Willing as he was to promise submission when he could not help himself, he was ready also to go from his word at the first favourable opportunity. He had now been plotting rebellion for some time with Anlaff, and this new outbreak was to have the support of large numbers of the Irish, and six other Danish and Welsh kings. So secretly had this been contrived that Anlaff entered the Humber with a fleet, and got possession of several towns, before Athelstan even knew of his approach ; but no sooner did he become aware of it than he hurried at the head of all his forces to oppose him. Many of the fortified towns interfering with Anlaff’s progress, before long the mutual relation of the armies to each other was this : both were encamped within a short distance of Leicester, each waiting the auspicious moment to commence the attack. Then it was that Anlaff, attempting to copy Alfred’s example and enter the royal camp in



disguise, was recognised by a soldier who formerly served under him. This man would not betray him, but he prevented the catastrophe which would have followed by disclosing Anlaff's intended stratagem, as soon as he was beyond the reach of pursuit.^b Athelstan forgave his soldier for not putting his enemy in his power; he had obeyed an honourable impulse in shielding him, and his royal master knew how to appreciate moral worth, but he immediately acted on his advice, and moved his quarters; had he not done so it would have been a woful night to him, for an unhappy prelate and his company, who encamped on the spot when he left it, were attacked and cut to pieces by the enemy.

This war ended with the battle of Brunaburg, in 937, when the royal army was formed into three divisions, each being headed by men of rank, namely, the first by Athelstan himself, another by his brother Edmond, and a third by Turketil,^c a cousin of Athelstan, and one of Alfred's grand-children, an honest and brave man, of whom we shall hear again by and by. Five kings and princes, and seven earls,^d fell in this battle; some historians say even that Constantine was slain, others make his death to take place elsewhere. But the victory, on which so much depended, and for which earnest prayers had been offered up in the camp of Athelstan before the commencement of the fighting,^e

^b "When the king severely reprehended him for not discovering his enemy, his answer was, 'Sir, the same oath which I lately took to your majesty I formerly took to Anlaff; and if I had violated it against him, you might justly suspect that I should do the same against your majesty.'" Cressy.

^c "Son of Cilward." Ingulphus. I suppose this must mean Alfred's son, Ethelwerd.

^d "Five kings and twelve earls." Ingulphus. "Five kings and seven earls." Roger Hoveden.

^e "Then he gave order that the holy archbishop Odo should be called, who, with hands lifted up to heaven, prayed for the king. And whilst fear and tumult possessed all, the king himself devoutly called on God and on *S. Aldelm*," &c. Cressy.

was complete. the Danes were totally routed. To Turketil is ascribed the glory of it ; he and his gallant band, called the London militia, were the heroes of the field : nothing stood before them. Among the melancholy features of an otherwise joyful event, we may place the fate of two young and promising relatives of Athelstan. Edwin and Ethelwin ; they were sons of Ethelwerd.^f After this battle Athelstan found it necessary to march into Wales and Cornwall to reduce these disaffected states to terms, in which he was successful. I suppose it must have been then that he founded the Churches of S. German's, S. Petroc's, Bodmin, and Pilton Priory. He also made a descent upon the Scilly Islands, and annexed them to the crown of England.

His reign was indeed, in all respects, a brilliant one ; among other proofs of which, witness the consideration shewn him by foreign princes and potentates, many of whom sent ambassadors to his court laden with presents ; of these, the gifts of Hugh the Great, count of Paris,^g were the most remarkable. Among the articles presented were the emperor Charlemagne's spear and sword ; the first reputed the same that pierced our Lord's side, the second adorned with one of the nails by which he was fastened to the cross.^h A piece of the true cross, and a fragment of the crown of thorns, are also named, besides a splendid onyx chalice, carved, a crown of gold set with diamonds, and Charlemagne's banner. The ambassadors bringing these gifts and

^f Camden says they were buried at Axminster, in Devon ; but as Exminster, near Exeter, was part of their father's patrimonial estate, it was probably there that they were interred. Some historians say that they were buried at Malmesbury.

^g Who married his sister. He was father to Hugh Capet. Andrews's Hist.

^h It had belonged to the emperor Constantine. William of Malmesbury.

Sosomen's account of the finding of the Cross. E. H. Book ii. c. 1.

relics were solemnly received, and entertained by the king and the court at Abingdon, in Berks.


I have said enough of Athelstan's character to shew that it was that of no ordinary man. In summing up his virtues his humility has been most remarked upon, that priceless quality which, more than any other, bears upon it the stamp of Christianity. It is said that his whole demeanour was gentle and attractive, as was his person, which is described as "rather short than tall, rather slim than lusty," and his countenance as "rather cheerful than merry;" his hair, which he wore plaited,ⁱ was of a yellowish texture, and he stooped a little.

Among his public benefits was that of causing the Holy Scriptures to be translated into the Saxon tongue, for the use of the unlearned, and his charities were only limited by his resources. Just indeed is the admiration bestowed upon him by almost every writer who has been at the pains to examine his character, but it is best expressed by Malmesbury, in this short and graceful sentence: "his life was little in time, but great in glory." Peace be to his memory; it lies under one cloud, but the tears which he shed have left the hues of the rainbow upon it, and there is no darkness there. He was interred at Malmesbury, in the year 941, leaving his brother, Edmond, heir to the crown. This arrangement, according to the Saxon customs, was the correct one, and as Athelstan never knew the happiness of wedded life, it was the most natural and obvious. Among the celebrated persons in this reign we may not omit S. Dunstan, who now first came into notice, but merely as a private individual.

ⁱ And twined with gold thread. William of Malmesbury.

THE REIGN OF EDMOND.

I FORGOT, when speaking of the battle of Brunaburg, to mention the distinguished man who, high in royal favour for his sanctity, was intrusted with the office of intercessor for the favourable termination of the coming struggle. His renown, however, does not end here; we find him acting in matters of importance, controlling, deciding, and directing, both as an ecclesiastic and a councillor of state, all through Edmond's reign, and fully as much esteemed by this young prince as he had previously been by his brother. It is indeed impossible to hurry by the career of such men with scarcely a passing notice. Of what use are dry details of events, as connected with a king or his government, when we know nothing of the minds by whose agency those events were brought about? Court influences are not the least part of history; in the Anglo-Saxon era the archbishop stood to his king in the double light of minister and spiritual guide; he was both at once, and therefore, next to the king, the first person in the realm. Thus arose that "priestcraft" against which historians are so bitter. Whether beneficial in its working, or prejudicial, it was no assumed or usurped position; it was the law of the land. Archbishop Odo is one of those who, when taken out of a sinful world, left behind him an endearing appellation; he was remembered as "the good archbishop." Among his more prominent acts was the framing of a body of constitutions for the benefit of the Church, and he sent them round to his clergy with a letter couched in the following terms:—



“ Were it possible that the wealth of the whole world were placed at my sovereign disposal, I would gladly distribute it all, and spend myself in addition, for the health of your souls. It is not on the ground of my own worth that I venture to offer advice or comfort to any one. No : aware of my unworthiness, and of my innumerable failings, I stand in need of advice and consolation from my brethren. But, on account of the ancient authority of Augustine, and the other holy men my predecessors, I have written this letter to you all, that Edmond, our august king, and all his people, may learn to practice the good which they see in us, and all they hear from us, and may rejoice to follow the example which we ourselves set to them. Farewell.”


This Odo was, in early life, a confessor to the Christian faith ; of wealthy Danish descent, he was disinherited by his parents for frequenting churches. The young boy wandered away from his comfortless home in utter destitution, and was protected and received by a noble called Athelmus, who, admiring his vigorous understanding, had him educated for the service of the Church, and who, it is said, was afterwards signally blest through the medium of his prayers, thus receiving the reward of his kind and benevolent action. Athelstan made Odo bishop of Sherburn, and Edmond, on ascending the throne, translated him to the see of Canterbury, which became vacant by the death of Wulhelm. This last promotion was earnestly resisted by Odo, but his objections were all over-ruled. Here you have a slight sketch of a man whose fame has been lightly handled by modern writers, but who, even if he should not prove free from blame, is far above those

who decry him. The point upon which he has been censured will appear in the sequel.

Another remarkable prelate in this reign was Wulstan, archbishop of York. There is little to be said about his sanctity, and, indeed, some of his actions were more than questionable. He and Odo took an active part in quelling the first disturbance that occurred after Edmond was made king ; for the Danes, as was their usual wont, no sooner knew of any change at the head of government, than they tried to gain some benefit for themselves through it. Athelstan had not been any time dead, when they rose in all the northern counties, and proclaimed Anlaff their king. He was soon at the head of a large force, and harassed the country as far as Northampton ; but the royal army marched to meet them, and the two contending bodies came in contact at Leicester. A short and undecided battle followed ; before there had been much fighting the two archbishops interfered, and persuaded king Edmond to make peace ; and a most disgraceful peace it was, through Wulstan's advice ; he, siding with the Danes, induced Edmond to allot to Anlaff a dominion over all the country beyond Watling Street, north. Watling Street was one of the great Roman roads, and its track is thus laid down in an ancient manuscript :—"It begins at Dover, and passes through the middle of Kent to London, then by S. Alban's, Dunstable, Stratford, Towcester, Littleburn, Mount-gilbert, near Shrewsbury, and the middle of Wales to Cardigan.^k"

Anlaff did not long enjoy this large dominion ;

^k This road is traced from the beginning to the ending, in the appendix to Richard of Cirencester, published with Dr. Giles's translation. Bohn's Antiquarian Library.



having incurred a debt to the king of Norway, for frequent assistance in troops, he levied so heavy a tax upon his people to pay off the incumbrance, that they would not submit to it. A large part, therefore, revolted from him, placing Reginald upon the throne, and the country continuing in a harassed state, through the irregularities of both these princes, Edmond re-assembled his army, and released several of the cities which he had ceded from the Danish tyranny ; thus Lincoln, Nottingham, Leicester, Stamford, and Derby, fell again to the crown. Marching still further north, Edmond obtained the submission of both Anlaff and Reginald, who being still pagans, were, on this occasion, persuaded to receive holy baptism, and Edmond stood godfather to both of them. I fear that their conversion was a feint. Not long after this they rebelled again against the crown of England, and the king of Cumberland joined himself to them. Edmond, whose superiority in the field seems to be unquestioned, now deprived them altogether of power, and banished them the country. He bestowed Cumberland on Malcolm, king of Scotland ; and for this new part of his kingdom, although not for the whole, as has been said, Malcolm certainly did do homage, and promised him all reasonable allegiance and aid when called for, by sea and by land. This was in the year 944.

During this reign a remarkable synod was held in Wales, by Howel Dha ; its provisions shew that country to have possessed at this time seven bishoprics, of which S. David's was the principal or metropolitan see. The season of Lent was made choice of for the sitting of the synod, in order that strict fasting might be

observed. I give these trifling incidental details to illustrate the mode of feeling and acting then.¹

The retiring of a prince from the throne to a monastery seems to have been less common now than formerly, but we have one instance of it brought before us in Constantine III. of Scotland. He became a monk of S. Andrews^m in 943. The same year king Edmond made Dunstan abbot of Glastonbury, the particulars connected with which I shall reserve, because he will necessarily take up so much of our attention in the following reigns, when the earlier incidents of his life will be mentioned. I shall, therefore, hasten at once to the closing scene of Edmond's career.

He had now been but a few years on the throne, but they had been years of hope ; he had shewn both prudence and capacity in governing, and was respected and loved. All these pleasant anticipations were frustrated at Pucklechurch, in Gloucestershire, where the king

¹ "Hywel Dha and his council adapted themselves for their national task at Ty Gwyn ar dav, by a due performance of the Lenten exercises. It appears from the laws which were then passed, that the king and queen did some sort of penance in Lent ; for it is there enacted that their chaplains should have the penitential robes which they respectively wore on the occasion." *The Cymry*, p. 298.

^m "This year Constantine III., son of Ethus, king of Scotland, resigned his crown, took the habit of a religious, and was made abbot of the Culdees, at S. Andrew's. . . . As often as they (the Culdees) are mentioned, we find them at S. Andrew's, which was within the division of the southern Picts ; neither are they said to have been here until after the see of Abernethy was removed hither, which was not done, as Buchanan reports, till the year 854. . . . we hear of them in the year 1108, when Turgot, prior of Durham, was made bishop of S. Andrew's. About this time the bishop of S. Asaph is of opinion, they were dean and chapter, and had a right of confirming the elections of all the bishops in Scotland. This privilege, his lordship conjectures, might belong to them upon the score of the primacy of the see of S. Andrew's. In the year 1272 the Culdees of S. Andrew's are mentioned by Silegrave, in his catalogue of the religious houses in Britain. In the year 1297, when the canons of S. Andrew's elected William Lamberton bishop, the Culdees opposed the election, and appealed to the pope, but without remedy, and from this time they lost all their right they had formerly enjoyed, that is, all the right of electing the archbishop, which probably belonged to them before, in consequence of their being dean and chapter of that see ; and this is all the creditable account of the Culdees in Scotland." *Collier*, vol. 1. p. 423.

kept high festival, in honour of God and S. Augustine. In an unhappy moment, when his young blood was heated with the excitement of the revel, his eyes lighted on Leofa, a man who had been a robber, and who now dared intrude himself at the royal table. Not waiting for others to seize and expel him, he rose himself upon him, and in so doing received the dagger of the miscreant into his heart. The assassin fell, struck at by all present, but when the struggle was past, the good king too was no more, the father of his people had perished from among them ! So fearful is sometimes the result of one unsubdued emotion. He died in the bright month of May, 946, leaving a widow and two infant sons. According to the Saxon law of succession they were set aside, as being minors, and Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, crowned Edred, who has before been taken notice of, to be the lawful king of England.

LECTURE XVIII.

A.D. 925—946.

BEFORE we go on to the reign of Edred it will be as well to give a few particulars of the birth, parentage, and education, of S. Dunstan. And first, the question arises, was he a real saint, or only an ambitious, crafty, designing man? How many have asked themselves this, and felt a difficulty in replying to it. And some have maintained his reputation through everything; while the greater number have looked upon it as utterly indefensible. Doubtless there is a difficulty at first sight in coming to a correct conclusion, but it does not seem to me that there is any in deciding that S. Dunstan was a very remarkable man, with splendid talents, and undoubted nobility of soul; and that if, in some of his actions, his judgment may be questioned, still, in the main, he was strict in his integrity; that whether he rode rough-shod over the state, or only kept the ascendancy given him by his moral position, he was at least faithful to the Church; that he was a great and good, if not a holy man. Our interest in his character is raised above that of mere history, by the thankful remembrance which has caused his name to be inscribed in the Church's calendar as a saint. Nor will our labour be lost in the inquiry; for S. Dunstan's career forms a prominent feature in the history of his times,

since, in common with many bishops of this period, he appears to have exercised more of the regal power than the king himself in the reigns in which he lived; moreover, when his influence was intercepted and put down, a revolution speedily followed, which shews what the people thought of S. Dunstan, or perhaps what he could do in turning their thoughts his way. Then, after he had been restored to his position, and might be supposed to be cured of meddling, or, at any rate, to desire ease and quiet, he went over the land with a restless activity, altering, reforming, re-arranging, wherever he thought change to be needed, and he began and carried through to victory a conflict the most difficult, the most outwardly hopeless, the most opposed to men's passions and prejudices that could well be imagined. It was in maintenance of a law not laid down in Holy Writ, but at that time strongly supported by ecclesiastical precedent, and the opinion of the stricter and most devoted portion of the Church, though at no time so universal as some would have us believe. I refer to the question of the celibacy of the clergy, a question it is not for us to consider except in a political and historical light, viz: as it affects S. Dunstan, and bears upon the history of our Church and country.

That S. Dunstan gained the victory in this matter as he did and when he did, must make any one exclaim, "this is no ordinary man; no common mind is here!" How far his motives were pure it is for the facts of his life to decide. Among those connected with it one stands prominently forward, that posterity has made him a saint. And if, as some say, he was so made not by posterity but by the Roman Church, the fact is not the

less significant. "Men's evil manners live in brass." Would it be easy for any Church to convince the world that Mary Queen of Scots was a martyr? or Napoleon a saint? But was S. Dunstan a saint we ask?

It is certain that his sanctity was never called in question until, by the religious changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men's minds had been turned adrift on matters both of faith and practice. The popular feeling became then so adverse to his cause, and to the kind of authority that he exercised, that it would readily take up insinuations unfavourable to his character, and stories reflecting on his honesty. We can now look back more calmly than it was possible to do amidst the struggles of the Reformation, and can understand how he may have acted sincerely and from the best motives, in enforcing rules which we are not bound to maintain. A reverence not always discriminating gave place then to a still less discriminating condemnation. We must endeavour to view his life and actions fairly, and be content to know so much as has come down to us with real evidence. A holy man may have erred in excess of strictness, and we must not at once suppose that he was wicked because he forbade what we believe to be lawful.

The first year of Athelstan's reign was the first also of S. Dunstan's life. He entered the world endowed with the advantages of birth and fortune, being the son of Herstan and Kynedred, both persons of rank, and nearly related to Athelmus, archbishop of Canterbury. The place of his birth was Glastonbury, that scene of interesting recollections and rich associations. Glastonbury was then what it is now, a place of desolation

and decay. Since the war with the Danes none had been found able or ready to restore it to its first glory ; its monastery was a ruin, its monks dead or dispersed, its sanctuary served irregularly, and only by a self-constituted body of clergy, living under self-imposed regulations. But Glastonbury was not, in one sense, what it is now ; its former holiness was remembered with regret, not sneered at and disparaged ; its traditions were believed ; its vacant shrine, if not eloquent night and day with the sounds of prayer and praise, found many a silent worshipper, was visited and loved. Danes, not Christians, had ravaged it, and still the old inhabitants of the country talked of the past with a sigh ; the sick still lingered round the holy well, hoping to derive strength and benefit from its consecrated wave ; pilgrims were often seen, pale and foot-weary, to tread with languid step the ancient street of the town, while, in contrast to their bodily fatigue, their eyes glistened, their bosoms heaved, and their whole intellectual and spiritual being seemed awakened into fresh energy and vigour, for these knew that the ground on which they were walking was no common soil ; it had been wetted by the tears of Saints and the blood of martyrs, it was hallowed by vows and embalmed by prayers ; here, too, kings, queens, knights, nobles, servants and followers of the cross, had crowded to lay their bones beneath the shadow of the Church, when the shadow of death was stealing over them, or the vanity of earthly joys had found its way to their hearts, through the silk and purple of their royal attire.

It was in a spot thus consecrated that S. Dunstan passed the earlier part of his eventful life ; here in

childhood he wandered about unrestrained, feeding his imagination on the past ; here he gazed on the mystic blossoms of the far-famed thorn, which yearly pay their homage to the cradle of the infant Saviour, and are since known to belong to a plant rare with us, but common upon the plains of Palestine ;^a here he learned the history of his Church and country ; here, by a body of Irish clergy, who had come on a pilgrimage to visit S. Patrick's shrine, and continued to reside on the spot, his studies were conducted, and his mind trained in every useful exercise ; here were sown the first seeds of that enthusiastic zeal which, chilled and checked for awhile by the atmosphere of a court, afterwards germinated and spread with a vigour which made its possessor at once the object of wonder, love, and fear.^b

It was soon discovered that his abilities were of no common order ; each source of learning which came within his reach he pursued successfully, and he made rapid attainments in the Latin language and patristic theology, as well as in different branches both of science and art. Men of education were rare then, schools, as we have seen, still rarer ; it is not wonderful, therefore,

^a Specimens of this thorn are still to be seen in the gardens in Somersetshire : they are grafts from the original tree, which, however, has long since disappeared. These thorns shew a few blossoms about Christmas, or soon after ; the flowers remain on the plant for a short period, and then die away, returning in the usual season. The legend is, that Joseph of Arimathæa founded a Church at Glastonbury ; when he reached the place he stuck his staff into the ground, which took root and became a flourishing tree. The country people still believe that the day on which the blossoms of the Glastonbury thorn open, is the true anniversary of our Lord's birth.

^b A surprising anecdote is told of the young boy. Always, from his birth, weak and delicate, he once fell dangerously ill with a fever ; his friends thought him dying, when he suddenly sprung up out of his bed, and rushed from the house. He ran so fast that, before they could overtake him, he had reached the Church ; the doors were closed, but, acting under the influence of delirium, he made his way up a flight of steps which carried him to the roof. Here he sunk down insensible, and, in this state, dropped from that fearful height into the interior of the building ; he was taken up unhurt. He used to say that an angel came to him and wafted him safely to the ground below.

that the notoriety of the young scholar reached the ears of his sovereign ; he was called to an office near the person of his royal master at the age of fifteen. There is a question raised as to whether this happened before Athelstan's death or afterwards. It could not well be before, if, as I believe, the date of S. Dunstan's birth is given correctly ; for Athelstan did not reign more than fourteen or fifteen years, fourteen years and ten weeks being the time allotted to his reign in the Saxon Chronicle, which is one of the best authorities on this point. Such mistakes do frequently occur in the early history of these realms, and they are very puzzling, but, in this case, the difficulty is not of material consequence, most historians being agreed as to the year of the saint's death, if not as to the time of his appearance in public life.* We will suppose him then brought into notice not by Athelmus, who died in the former part of Athelstan's reign, when his nephew was but an infant, but by either Wulfhelm, then archbishop of Canterbury, or his uncle Elphege, bishop of Winchester, and that this took place soon after Edmond came to the throne.

There does not seem, in what we now hear of him, any promise of his subsequent career. Young, noble, accomplished, he was a man of strict honour and integrity, but nothing more ; he was not a religious man. The world had laid claim to his heart, and he had no power to resist its charms, its sunshine was all round him, and the flowers that strew so profusely the attractive paths of literature continued to allure him forward by their

* And it may be that many of the writers of his life, living as they did at a considerably later period, copied their statement from his first biographer, Bridferth, who may easily, in naming the person through whose influence he was introduced to his sovereign, have put Athelmus for Wulfhelmus, and so occasioned the blunder.

never ending fascination ; he scrupulously fulfilled the duties of each post with which he was entrusted, but, in his leisure hours, he indulged himself in cultivating Saxon poetry, music, painting and engraving, and when he was urged by his relatives to devote his learning to the Church, he balanced the matter in his mind, and decided on a secular life, in preference to one which would entail upon him duties inconsistent with the free indulgence of his present luxurious tastes. And it was to these apparently harmless pursuits that he owed the ruin of his day dream of happiness. To be distinguished at court, is to be surrounded by secret enemies ; nor was it long before surmises and whispers to the prejudice of the young scholar reached the royal chamber. I need not remind you that at this time the belief in magic prevailed universally. Connected as Saxon poetry was with heathen mythology, it was held to be wrong to indulge in it, and the productions of S. Dunstan's graving tools were pronounced too magnificent to have been made without the assistance of the evil one. His harp they said, was heard by night to sound sweetly on the walls of his room, when no mortal finger touched its strings, and its melody, even under the hand of its skilful master, was too thrillingly beautiful for such strains to be supposed to proceed except from one gifted with supernatural power.^d I take no notice of Hume's sneer against his moral character ; I believe it was untainted.^e This may appear to us very ridiculous,

^d S. Dunstan's harp fast by the wall,
Upon a pin did hang-a ;
The harp itself, with ly and all,
Untouched by hand did twang-a.

Fuller's History, p 195.

^e Osborne speaks of S. Dunstan as "a young man well known in Edmond's court for his innocence of life, and elegance of manners and endowments." Quoted by Cressy.

but let us remember that although we boast, in these days, to have exploded all belief in magic, even to an extent which almost banishes the awe we ought to have of the "prince of the power of the air," or indeed of the continual unseen agency of good and evil angels around us, characters, alas ! are still whispered away, on grounds equally, if not more, trivial than the accusations against S. Dunstan : the secret shaft is aimed, it seems to glance by its victim without wounding him ; but it is poisoned, and he soon fades away from the social circle. S. Dunstan shared no better fate ; he came at last to be regarded with coldness and suspicion by the king himself. On some unmerited disgrace falls lightly, they trust to reinstate themselves, they compel inquiry, they demand proof. Not so S. Dunstan ; high in his sense of personal integrity, ardent and sensitive in his affections, he turned disgusted from the scene of such injustice ; he left the walks of public life, and retired to the house of his relative, bishop Elphege, there to chew the cud of bitter grief and disappointment. A long illness followed, and it was in this illness that his soul was visited by new and better feelings ; he became a real penitent, and lamented with all his heart that an interval of luxurious ease should have alienated from him former religious impressions, that he could no longer offer the first fruits of his youth and energies to the Author of his being. And here some may doubt the necessity for attaching to him the stern name of penitent, when, morally speaking, his life had been irreproachable ; but the true catholic Christian measures not character by the world's standard : a life not devoted to the glory of God, which is the sole end of


our being, is a momentary life, however available in the estimation of the many. Our duties and responsibilities are proportioned, they have a mutual relation to each other, and as the spiritual faculty within us : who neglect this relation exists, and this cause may be perverted, the responsibility remains. Nor need the name of penitence carry with it a hard idea : it is one the contrite heart loves and treasures, he seeks to prolong the feelings with which it is associated, he never wishes to leave it : he has learned that the tears of penitence, although they begin in sorrow, are soon changed into tears of joy and thankfulness, and bring with them a peace none can appreciate but those who have tasted it. We may well imagine what S. Dunstan felt during the season of his recovery, how his soul became gradually cheered and lightened as his resolve of self-dedication assumed permanence and reality, how gales from old Glastonbury seemed to fan his brows in sleep, and grotesque images, such as he had seen intersecting the arches of its ruined Church,¹ looked at him in the darkness of the night, beckoning him back to the calm home of his childhood, to kneel again in the midst of them, or pointing upwards to another and far sweeter home, which was, henceforth, to be the object of his aspiring. Like many who are destined to prolonged toil in a world of sin and strife, this season of recovery was a moment of rest, a foretaste of the deferred future, a bright gleam

¹ There is so much difficulty in deciding the exact dates of the earlier Churches, that although this allusion applies more strictly to the Anglo-Norman than the Anglo-Saxon style, I have not thought it necessary to remove it. It must be remembered that the Church in question was King Ina's Church, of which, if any portion remained, some of the stones might possibly be carved, as were so many of the monuments of northern art. The Church of St. Piran, in Cornwall, now admitted to be a structure belonging to the seventh century, had three rude stone heads in the doorway ; one formed the key-stone of the arch, the others supported it at the spring on either side.

of happiness which he was allowed to enjoy in order that what was shadowy in his vows and prayers might become substantial, that his ideas and wishes might have time to form themselves into principles of action, that he might gird himself with the spiritual armour which was to be his defence during the days of his pilgrimage. But the habits of the past were still upon him, and they must be eradicated. To this end he consulted his uncle, who, as soon as his recovery permitted, received his vows in Winchester Cathedral, and, consecrating him priest, sent him with his pastoral benediction and a monk's cowl back to Glastonbury, where he was shortly afterwards appointed to officiate as regular minister.

Here his life was divided between the duties annexed to his charge and the attainment of those habits of self-discipline for which his soul panted. With this view he denied himself, (as so many of the holy have done before him,) all outward consolations, and the charms of social intercourse, and passed much of his time in fasting, retirement, and prayer, in a kind of cell outside the town. This cell was only four feet long by two and a half broad, and of a man's height. He could not have remained more than a year or two in this situation, but the period, whatever may have been its length, was rich in spiritual fruits; wandering souls were reclaimed by his prayers, and many of these rescued ones gave themselves willingly to his direction, to lead lives the reverse of their former lawlessness. It is during this interval, too, that miracles are attributed to him. I shall neither lay great stress on this fact nor discredit it; it is impossible now to examine into the evidences

in which these miracles rest, or indeed to separate the true from the false, in such details as have reached us, it is sufficient that they obtained belief in the minds of better persons than we are, and that this belief was for many centuries universal is a reason for not altogether setting it aside, however some may sneer at our credulity: another and a stronger is, that it is somewhat like an irreverent limiting of the Divine power and goodness by our own narrow understanding. There is a homely proverb which it would be well to remember more frequently than we do: that "incredulity and ignorance go together." Few deny the doctrine of particular Providences; and why? Because unless we are very hardened and unbelieving we cannot have lived long without tracing them, by personal observation, in some one or more special case. Yet particular Providences are a species of miracle; for in them natural causes are, by the Divine Author of our being, either supernaturally intercepted or made subservient to a merciful purpose. These particular Providences are mostly of two kinds; they are answers, in the shape of deliverance, to the prayers of persons in distress and difficulty, or they are deliverances which have not been immediately prayed for, but which we feel could only have arisen through the watchful care of our Heavenly Father for us; therefore we believe and acknowledge them. But this is to acknowledge more than we are aware of, for such Providences are in fact miracles, if we will reason fairly. That more striking miracles do not now occur may arise from one of three causes: I. That it may be no longer the Divine will to permit them to occur. II. Or, that there is a want of that faith



among us, through the agency of which miracles were formerly performed. III. Or, that as the solemn duties of fasting and prayer, which gave holy men of old the power to work them, are now scarcely recognised, so hardly any of us are fit even to judge whether the gift might not be vouchsafed again to a high degree of personal holiness. That S. Dunstan was at this time practically holy appears not only from his life of self-denial, which his enemies say was an artful device to raise him in the public esteem, but from the following unequivocal indication. Among those whom his instructions had blest was a noble lady called Ethelfleda,* of royal descent and great wealth. She was a widow : and in her hour of earthly trial she applied for "ghostly comfort and counsel" to him whose reputation for sanctity was everywhere spoken of. S. Dunstan gave her more than this, for he gave her his prayers, and soon her anguish was calmed, and the dawn of brighter hopes shed a lustre on her dreary existence. She lived awhile to glorify God for so rich a consolation, and dying, she made S. Dunstan and the Church sole inheritors of her wealth. About the same time his father also died, and, the family estates falling to him, he thus became at once the possessor of an enormous property. He did not for a moment hesitate as to the destination of his riches, he divested himself entirely of them, dividing them into two portions ; the first he dedicated to the Church, the other to the relief of its poor members ; and the poor loved and were enriched by him, and he who had been rich became poor. Such was S. Dunstan's life at Glastonbury.

I have said that one of Edmond's last acts was to

* Aelfgine. Fuller.

make him abbot there. He had, shortly before his death, recalled him to court, being convinced of his innocence, and desirous to constitute him his own spiritual guide. It is alleged that even after this S. Dunstan was again suspected, but only for three days, or rather, he had not retired for more than that period when he was summoned by the king, who repented already of his injustice. I cannot exactly fix the time of this second disgrace, but there is a close affinity between four events connected with S. Dunstan; his becoming possessor of Ethelfleda's wealth, his return to king Edmond's favour, his rebuilding the Church and monastery at Glastonbury, and the grant from t'he king, which made him not only abbot of that monastery, but conferred on him and his successors in the important office a power almost regal in its immediate vicinity.^b May not Ethelfleda's moneyⁱ have aided in this work of restoration? I do not feel sure, but there could have been no better way of appropriating it; and while some historians speak of king Edmond as re-building, others give the praise to S. Dunstan.^k Be this as it may, king Edmond made a journey to see what had

^b "And their lands shall be free to them, and released from all exactions, as my own are. But more especially shall the town of Glastonbury, in which is situated that most ancient Church of the holy Mother of God, together with its bounds, be more free than other places. The abbot of this place alone shall have power, as well in causes known as unknown, in small and in great, and even in those which are above and under the earth, on dry land and in the water, in woods and in plains, and he shall have the same authority of punishing or remitting the crimes of delinquents perpetrated within it as my court has, &c. &c." Extract from king Edmond's charter to Glastonbury, given in the year of our Lord, 944. It was written in letters of gold, in the book of the gospels which he presented to the same Church. See William of Malmesbury's "King's of England." Sharpe's translation.

ⁱ Fuller says, speaking of this lady's wealth, "Enabled with the accession thereof, joined to his paternal possessions, which were very great, and now fallen into his hands, Dunstan erected the abbey of Glastonbury, and became himself first abbot thereof." Church Hist. page 197.

^k "About the year 941, some say 944, a great synod was held in London, under Edmond, wherein several constitutions passed, the most remarkable of which is, that bishops were enjoined to repair their Churches and the king to establish funds for their support." Mortimer's Hist.

been done, and installed S. Dunstan in his new dignity with his own royal hands. And here we must now leave him, having brought his history to that point at which it becomes blended with public events. And I think we may, without partiality, say that he appears so far not merely blameless, but highly exalted in the scale of holiness : it is his after deeds that are called in question.


LECTURE XIX.

A.D. 946—955.

THE REIGN OF EDRED.

THE succession to the crown, after Edmond's death, devolved, not to his oldest son, but in the order which seems to have prevailed through much of the Anglo-Saxon period, and with which we first became acquainted by the provisions of Ethelwolf's will. I cannot understand how it is that so many historians take the trouble to surmise and give reasons why the children are set aside, and the brother of the late monarch chosen to fill his place. We have frequent instances of this kind; and that there was then, within certain limitations, an elective power in the great council of the country, the "Witenagemot," and a controlling power in the Church, there can be little doubt. One thing also is clear, that in the present case, Edmond's sons were, from their extreme youth, quite unfit to hold the reigns of government.

Edred was crowned by archbishop Odo, in the year 946. He was a young man of great delicacy of constitution, and laboured under a complaint of the stomach, which caused him much suffering. The first event of his reign was an outbreak in the north; the troublesome Danes, finding a young and inexperienced prince at the head of affairs, fell to their old game, and were




so rapid in organizing a rebellion, that they trusted to carry all before them. But Edred had some of their own quicksilver in his veins; his forces were under arms and in marching order much sooner than they expected, and his able chancellor, Turketyl, whose valour is already familiar to us,* preceded his royal master to the scene of the revolt, to try the effect of argument in making them return to their allegiance. Turketyl was successful in this first attempt, the Danes promised everything. I grieve to say that Wulstan, archbishop of York, who, you will remember, had already shewn undue partiality to this unruly people, was now foremost among the insurgents, and that the same Malcolm of Scotland, who had taken such solemn oaths of fealty to the English crown not many years before, had also broken his faith. Edred's promptness disconcerted all their preparations, but only for awhile; before long he was obliged to march an army both into the north and into Scotland, to compel what he had a right to expect. And these Danish outbreaks followed so quickly one on another, that, his patience at last worn out, he ended by ravaging the country occupied by the insurgents, as a punishment for their audacity, and garrisoning all their walled towns with English soldiers. During this interval the Danes recalled Anlaf from Ireland, and set him up as their king, but as he tyrannized over them, they again rejected him, and chose Henricus or Eric, which last appointment Edred confirmed, in one of his many hopeless negotiations with them.

Finding himself again deceived, he would keep terms

* At the battle of Brunaburg, page 293.

no longer, but made an English earl, called Osulf, governor over the province of Northumberland. After this the treacherous rebels, terrified at last into submission by the devastations committed by the royal army, meanly put Eric's son to death, by way of propitiating Edred, and delivered up their patron and adviser, the contumacious archbishop of York, to the royal mercy. He was thrown into prison, a punishment, by the way, richly deserved by him, and afterwards only released on account of the many petitions in his favour; in consideration of which he was removed to the see of Dorchester, and, finally, restored to his archbishopric. He did not long survive his disgrace, which is thought to have hastened his death. Peace was thus concluded in 954, but the effects of the war remained; a whole tract of country had been laid waste, and S. Wilfrid's beautiful Church, at Ripon, destroyed.

These disturbances fill up most of the reign; it is hardly necessary to enter more minutely into their details, they are of a piece with Danish insurrections at all times, bad faith, cowardice, treachery, presumption, cunning, rapacity, and short-sighted policy on the one side; forbearance, forgiveness, moderation, valour, and final success, on the other. But the interests of religion require that something more should be said of Edred's public and private character, and of his administration of state affairs, before we allow his early death to veil him from our eyes. It is a pleasing task to describe these, for the young prince, although weak in health, was far from being weak in mind or purpose; he was at once gentle and bold, firm yet judicious. I am not aware that any crime has been laid to his charge, but



the very equivocal one of loving the Church too much, and honouring her ministers, especially S. Dunstan, by whose advice he was mainly governed. We may make allowance for a portion of this prejudice from one cause, and one only : it was now that foreign monks began to be introduced into England to fill newly-founded monasteries, and for the purpose of teaching and restoring that discipline which, through the confusion of late years, existed but in name. Englishmen are ever jealous of foreign interference. The inquiry is not what were these ecclesiastics, or how far their coming over was a necessity, and not an intrusion ; the fact that they were foreigners was quite sufficient to raise a clamour against them, and such jealousy their own subsequent history has tended to foster. But this will be explained by and by more clearly. It is reasonable to suppose that Edred's devout character, in union with the guidance and advice of S. Dunstan, led to the blamelessness of his career. Had he fallen into any grave political error, that prelate would, doubtless, have had the credit of it, but he gained no praise for advising him well, although it is admitted that he taught him, at least, self-government, and how to bear without complaining the paroxysms of pain to which he was frequently liable through the inveteracy of his disease. It is said that he was so humble as to receive, more than once, corporal chastisement at the hands of S. Dunstan. This fact is of itself a condemnation of S. Dunstan with most persons, simply because such penances are disused, and shock modern notions : but in taking a fair historical view of the subject, we should recollect that in this period the Church allowed of

bodily punishment for sin, and sometimes prescribed it. That faithful priests of the Church have obeyed her laws then is no proof of their being "haughty" or "insolent." Neither, as we know nothing of the cause of Edred's submission to this discipline, can we judge how far it was needed to subdue that flesh which even the blessed apostle S. Paul was obliged to "keep under and bring into subjection." One thing is certain, that Edred loved and blest the hand that corrected him.

S. Dunstan's time was passed between his favourite monastery and the royal presence. His duties to the former were neither forgotten nor neglected; already the rule of S. Benedict was observed by the newly-restored brotherhood, and a school for training persons of the higher ranks was attached to the establishment; for the evils of ignorance were never unfelt by those who had the interests of religion at heart. Ethelwold and Oswald, two famous names in the succeeding reigns, were here educated, and they became able followers and assistants in that plan of ecclesiastical reform which was soon to be set on foot throughout the country. But one of the most interesting characters of the day was the brave chancellor Turketyl, king Alfred's grandson, so often conspicuous in the field of battle both as leader and adviser, so faithful, during three reigns, to the trusts reposed in him, connected as they were with the most important state affairs, and now hoary in years, but rich in honours and distinctions. The close of his career is beautifully related by Mr. Maitland, in his book on the "Dark Ages," from which I gather what I am going to tell you. It was in an expedition

to make peace with the Danes,^b (many histories say in king Edmond's reign, but it is more consistent with the bearing of different facts to place it in Edred's,) that this old warrior passed near Croyland, or rather near what remained of that noble monastery. The only inhabitants of the place were three aged monks, their years so many that we should call them superannuated. You cannot have forgotten the boy Turgar, or the thrilling events of which he was an eye witness ; he was one of them, and his subsequent life had not belied its commencement ; he had shewn the same steady adherence to principle, which, as a child, he displayed ; the same spirit was in him. Poverty, decay, and desolation, had continued to brood over Croyland ; all that had been attempted in the way of restoration, had been afterwards undone by public calamity, all that piety had bestowed on the monastery, rapacity had wrested from it ; of its monks, some had died, others had forsaken it. Turgar had numbered already eighty-eight years, and might not look to see better times ; but the good cause was yet cherished in his heart, and the fire of his zeal unquenched. And so it was, that when he and his two aged companions heard that Turketyl, the king's chancellor and trusty friend, was expected to pass so near to them, it occurred to them to meet him, and to gain his interest for their dear home, for perhaps he might persuade the king to cause some of the alienated lands of the abbey to be restored to them. Their attempt prospered, and they had the satisfaction of bringing back the chancellor and his suite to spend the night under their roof. Their tale seemed strange, but

^b A.D. 946, the same year that Edred came to the throne.

it was simple and straightforward, and it failed not to make a deep impression upon Turketyl ; their poverty, their patience, their endurance, how wonderful they were ! All he heard and saw excited feelings of admiration ; he visited with them every spot consecrated to holy memories, he prayed where their prayers had so long been offered in outward loneliness, but in communion with so many glorious saints “ of whom the world was not worthy,” and, when he departed, he left his heart behind him. From that time until he returned to Croyland, never again to leave it, he talked and thought of little else. He arranged his worldly affairs, he resigned into the king’s hands his sixty manors, reserving only one in ten for the monastery, and, much to his monarch’s grief, he retired from public life, in the year 948. He was accompanied by the king, who remained long enough to bestow with his own hand the pastoral staff of abbot upon his favourite, and by many of his former comrades, who resolved, as they had shared his warlike toils, to share his devotions likewise. Some became monks, others settled near the monastery, all were benefactors to it ; and soon the ruined walls were rebuilt, the alienated lands for the most part re-purchased or given back by those who held them, and Croyland arose once more from the edge of the marsh, in the glory of architectural magnificence, and the sweetness of praise. And the long-tried Turgar ! may he not well have exclaimed with the devout Simeon, “ let Thy servant depart in peace : for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation ! ”

We must not allow such touching anecdotes to give the air of a one-sided history to the Anglo-Saxon

period. It is strange that so few consider that the state of things which creates noble and attractive deeds is often a most melancholy one. This the next reign will fully shew ; meanwhile it may not be amiss to recal a few considerations connected with those we have passed through ; they are the reverse side of the picture.

All the piety and munificence of Alfred failed in raising more than three religious houses, (and it must be remembered that such establishments were then the essential elements of a return to civilization of life and morals,) schools for learning were rare both in his and the following reigns, the brilliant, and, in most cases, able, administrations of his successors, did little either in naturalizing the Danes, or in uprooting the vices which prevailed through their evil example and heathenish practice, and the clergy had, all agree, sunk to a deplorable ignorance and looseness of living. Add to this, that many districts were destitute of spiritual care, that many lay waste, that estates were frequently seized and held by fraud and violence, and the remedy of an appeal to royalty was difficult and tedious ; that often the only hope of saving females of rank from being forcibly carried off, or otherwise ill-treated, was by secluding them from their pursuers in a monastery ; that even these sacred asylums were sometimes violated ; and you have a position of affairs that is far from desirable or pleasing in contemplation. Perfect, too, as were Alfred's laws, it is plain that already they were disobeyed, or disused, and that none could count on the quiet and protection of a well ordered government. While then we admire those fearless and self-devoted spirits that rose buoyant on this troubled sea,

stemmed its billows, and grappled with its dangers, let us not forget our own substantial and inestimable blessings, our present of calm enjoyment, our recognized ordinances and privileges, and our promised future of greater earnestness.

LECTURE XX.

A.D. 955—959.

THE REIGN OF EDWIN.

UNDER the Anglo-Saxon dynasty the democratic principle, so common in these days, was almost unknown. Only the turbulent and vicious disputed the religious position of the king, as first in the realm, and any attempt on their part to prove that his right to govern depended on the public estimate of his powers of governing, would have been thought little less than blasphemy ; and that, because a king of this period was considered strictly as the “ Lord’s anointed.” This was the law of the Church, and the law of the Church was still paramount. However lax the nobles and clergy might be in their private morals, they respected the Church ; she was the acknowledged authority which made even kings tremble, although, in one sense, set above it, and her authority pronounced the reigning monarch, (if duly consecrated and appointed,) the first man in the kingdom ; owing submission indeed to her laws and to the laws of the land, but, short of this, claiming deference, submission, and allegiance from all. For the king represented or personated the Divine government, and was a type of it ; in like manner a ruler in the Church, a bishop in his diocese, an arch-

bishop in his province, and now the pope in western christendom, acted as the representative or type of her great Head in Heaven. And both these earthly powers were to be obeyed, for conscience sake, each in its province ; until, forgetting that their right was a delegated authority, they required their people to commit sin or entertain opinions contrary to the Divine law. Now it is clear that in a Christian state these two authorities *can* co-exist, for the one always bears out the legitimate authority of the other, but it does not always follow that because they *can* they *will*. However plainly the respective limits of each are defined and marked out, there is danger that the ambitious or bad man, either in Church or state, may overstep those limits. Hence has arisen the constant struggle that has agitated our country during so many succeeding centuries ; and the contest has been called that of the “ regale and pontificate,” or, in other words, that between the regal and ecclesiastical rights.

Much of the confusion in modern ideas arises from not separating this question of rights from the men whose actions or whose interests are involved in it. Historians mix up men’s actions and their mode of administering laws with the laws themselves : thus we read of the encroachments of the Church or the exactions of the government, and do not often stop to consider where the real blame lies. A feeble government, for instance, does not imply bad laws, a bad state of the Church does not imply defect in her teaching, although both these may possibly exist together. The right way is to judge of public men and public matters separately, to examine carefully whether it is the character of the

individual, or the enactment which this individual seeks to carry out, that disturbs us. And there is a further distinction which we should make : we should remember that the law of the Church may be set at nought by one in authority, but cannot be annulled ; it is fixed and universal, and holds good in right, though put aside by violence, so far as it is founded on Divine institution, or has been settled by council and received by the consent of the whole Church ; while the law of the state in England, at least before the signing of Magna Charta, was very little fixed or determined, and might be changed, to a great extent, by the reigning sovereign. These reflections, although seemingly far-fetched, will be seen to have a bearing upon the circumstances of the Church, and of the kingdom, as connected with it, in most of the succeeding reigns.

William of Malmesbury relates how S. Dunstan, after having been told of his beloved monarch's illness, was hastening to him, when he heard a voice saying, " Edred has died in the Lord ;" and he saw, at the same time, a great light. We will not stop to examine into the truth of this vision, but none can doubt that there was light and peace round that gentle monarch's death bed ; a radiance soon to be quenched in the dark career of his infatuated nephew.

The history of this young man's coronation has been variously given. Nothing could exceed, in those days, the solemnity of such a ceremony ; both in its civil and religious character it was held to be of the very last importance, and the time and manner of performing it hastened or lengthened out according as circumstances seemed to warrant. It was no matter of course that

the new king should take his rank, it must be determined in an assembly of the nation ; it was no matter of course that the archbishop, in union with the other dignitaries of the Church, confirmed the decision of the nation ; the consecration was frequently deferred when the public voice had proclaimed the king ; sometimes it did not take place until years after, if doubts or impediments arose. But in most cases the Church and the nobles, and members of the national assembly, acted together, and so they did in the present instance ; it being agreed that, as Edred's children were infants^a in law, his brother Edmond's son, Edwin, should succeed to the regal dignity.

He is described as being of an attractive appearance, very fair and comely, but weak and unsettled in his principles. On the occasion of his coronation, he met his nobles at Kingston-upon-Thames ; with them were assembled archbishop Odo, S. Dunstan, and a large body of the clergy. Then came the ceremony, which even now is conducted with much pomp and circumstance, and which had a much higher meaning in the feelings of our Saxon progenitors. The form of the oath taken has descended to us. It runs thus :—" In the name of the ever blessed Trinity, I promise three things to the Christian people and my subjects. First, that the Church of God and the Christian people within my dominions shall enjoy uninterrupted peace, that is, be free from any molestation. Secondly, that I will prevent theft and every kind of fraud in all ranks of men. Thirdly, I engage to preserve and maintain justice and clemency in all judicial proceedings, that the kind

^a They were called Elfrid and Bedfrid. Rapin.

merciful God may, according to his eternal mercy, forgive us all our sins, who liveth and reigneth," &c. &c.^b

After the oath had been administered, came a solemn charge from the archbishop, admonishing the king of his duties to the Church and state, setting forth his responsibilities, and detailing the obligations resting upon them, viz. to see that all within the realm be protected from unjust judgment, to succour the orphan and the stranger, to restrain theft, punish vice, reward merit; to dissolve improper marriages, abolish sorcery, clear the land of the parricide and perjured person, feed the poor, take counsel of the wise and experienced, give the administration of difficult and important posts to men of known probity and ability, and in short, to govern as one who will have to account for what he does at the awful tribunal of the last day.^c

So you see that the office of consecration, even then, was no mere choice of a chieftain or leader for the people, to govern according to his own will, or an excuse for increased festivities and public rejoicings, but a grave and most solemn ceremonial, which, in a seriously-minded prince, would naturally lead to greater seriousness of deportment, and to a thoughtful consideration of the duties to which he had pledged himself, and the conduct which was expected from him by those who had so elected him.

^b A.D. 955. This form of oath is given as being that administered by S. Dunstan to king Ethelred, taken, it is said, from an ancient Saxon MS. in the Cottonian Library, and from the MS. code of constitutions in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, cap. 2, entitled, *Be eorthlecum cynige*. See Mortimer's History of England.

^c Although it may be argued that this account applies, strictly, to another coronation, and not to Edwin's, yet there is no reason for doubting that in the same period, the same ecclesiastical authorities being present, the same form would be used, and the same oath administered; it is not, therefore, I think, going from the integrity of the narrative, to insert it here, instead of farther on.

It would be impossible for a sovereign so circumstanced not to acknowledge himself under an obligation to the nation ; and this was generally a willing task, graceful in the monarch and grateful to the people ; it was the pledge of a sincere intention to govern well, and not to slight responsibilities laid thus solemnly upon him. When, however, Edwin had returned from the holy ceremonies and services which attended his coronation, viz. his being anointed with oil, making the usual offerings at the altar of “gold, frankincense, and myrrh,” having the “sacred bracelet” put upon his arm, and the crown on his head, and the sceptre into his hand, and all this accompanied by the prayers and blessings of the Church, his mind was far from being impressed or his conduct correct. He was young, some may say, and thoughtless, but is this an excuse ? Are the young callous in feeling ? Is it not the habit of vice spread over a long period that ends by hardening the heart ? No ; Edwin must have been already lost to all sense of religion, honour, decency, and good feeling, when he could, on the same day, leave his nobles and clergy at the banquet and betake himself to the society of two wicked women. There cannot be any reasonable doubt of this fact, although there may exist doubts as to the exact nature of their sinful connexion with Edwin. They came, mother and daughter, it is said, to the royal palace, and requested to see the king. One writer of this period states that this was done by the mother to force the king to marry her daughter ;^d another that the lady was a person of incorrect character^e and not Edwin’s lawful wife ; another that they

^d Bridferth.^e The Nero MSS.

were too near of kin to marry ;^f others again vary these accounts more or less, but the united testimony of all shews that this connexion of Edwin's was of an improper nature, and that there were just grounds for the indignation which his conduct called forth in the prelates Odo and S. Dunstan.^g They are represented as transported beyond a point at such an open contempt of religion,^h not to speak of the gratuitous insult his conduct offered to the assembled nobles ; and S. Dunstan is stigmatized for allowing his annoyance to outrun the respect due to his sovereign. I do not care to spend time in his defence. Those who are ignorant that there are moments when lenient measures would fail, when rough treatment is really the most kind that can be shewn, are at liberty to think that king Edwin might have been won back by another line of conduct, but can any wonder at the excitement of a holy priest and servant of God at such an unblushing violation of his laws ? Is it excusable, and right, and consistent, in baptized persons, to justify the unhappy king's after excesses as proceeding from a natural and reasonable resentment against those through whom he had suffered ?ⁱ

^f William of Malmesbury. See the note in "Lingard's Anglo-Saxon Church," vol. ii. appendix. where all the different statements are compared.

^g The Saxon Chronicle says, "This year, (A.D. 955,) king Edred died, and Edwy, the son of king Edmund and Alfgiva, took upon him the kingdom, but he banished S. Dunstan out of the land." There is no mention of the separation between the king and his mistress until three years afterwards. Abbot Brompton, as quoted in Historical Collections, gives the following account of what took place at the coronation :—"Upon the day of his coronation, he (king Edwin) rushed into the nefarious embraces of a great nobleman's lady, though she was his kinswoman ; for which, being reproved by the blessed Dunstan, he banished him." See also Fuller's account, "Church History," p. 198 ; and Rapin's, vol. i. p. 105 ; and Matt. Westminster, &c. Sir John Prise's History of Wales has the following :—"He forcibly married another man's wife."

^h "All were indignant at the shameless deed, and murmured among themselves." William of Malmesbury.

ⁱ There are some who justify Edwin, on the assumption that the lady in question was his lawful wife and queen ; this is but to blind their readers,

But we have not yet said what was the line of conduct taken by S. Dunstan in this difficult matter. He did not stop to consider points of court etiquette or royal favour; he at once entered the royal chamber, and forcibly dragged the reluctant king from the dangerous seductions of his unhallowed companions. Nor was this act of his altogether unsanctioned by the assembled nobles, they were loud in their murmurs at the young prince's impropriety of conduct, and from among the clergy the prelate Kynsey accompanied and aided S. Dunstan in his painful duty.

This attempt at reforming Edwin, and any of the more private ways of reclaiming him which were doubtless pursued by his friends and advisers, and by the Church, were without permanent fruit; he continued his life of sin, and added to it that of hating the authority that had interposed to rescue him. How many kings have thought as he did, that could they but get rid of this uncomfortable element of interference in their pleasures, of this despised but dreaded Church, they could then enjoy themselves without restraint, and perhaps even govern the better for it. It was, however, less difficult to get rid of S. Dunstan than it might at first have appeared. His keen and experienced sight soon penetrated through the thin veil of seeming deference which the king dared not withhold from him, to the deep unquiet animosity which was the reigning feeling of that monarch's breast; he determined, therefore, to return

and carry the argument; it is nothing but a bare-faced assertion, which every fact connected with the subject is calculated to disprove. There is a charter brought forward, in which she signs as queen, by Lappenburg, but there is no date attached to it, so that it scarcely establishes anything but what is not disputed, viz., that Alfgiva *did* become Edwin's queen, not that the connexion was a lawful one.

to his beloved cloister. For S. Dunstan had not sought political power, it had been forced upon him ; not long since he had refused the rich see of Winchester, because of the responsibilities it would entail upon him, how then can it be supposed that an insatiable ambition was the spring of his conduct ?

Yet we cannot doubt that he suffered in leaving the court, as they do who resign an important post because the pressure of wickedness from without is so great that they can no longer hope to stem it ; he suffered, not at quitting the gay scenes in which he was unwillingly present, but because the victory was on the side of evil instead of truth. It does not appear, either, that he gave up his political position without a struggle ; he remained in it in the face of odium, suspicion, and false accusation, for some months after the coronation, during which period many attempts were made to bring him into trouble, but they failed. For instance, he was required in council to give a full account of the monies placed in his hands by Edwin's predecessor ; he refused to do it, on the ground that the monies had been entrusted to him for purposes connected with the Church, on which they had been strictly expended ; he who had entrusted him was satisfied, who else had any right to enquire ? And he took this opportunity of pointing out to the government how large a sum was still needed to make king Edmond's foundation at Glastonbury what it ought to be. So the council felt very awkwardly situated, and did not press the charge against him, (it was clearly impolitic to do so ; they wanted money refunded, not to be urged for fresh supplies,) they had outwitted themselves.

This and other acts of petty persecution seem to have determined him to withdraw, and, the resolution once made, who can doubt that his weary longing heart, sickened by the unholy scenes he had been witnessing, pined for the sweet aisles of his Church at Glastonbury, whose repose was only broken by the sounds of prayer and praise? Who will not think of him, on his long journey westward, as lightened and cheered at each step of his horse in the wished-for direction, as eyeing the countless beauties of nature spread forth before him with a deeper interest because they added to his own thankful sense of personal freedom? For the power to serve God without distraction is freedom to the devout mind, and a life of prayer a life of peace.

His retirement from the royal presence was far from allaying the king's uneasiness. We know how the guilty fear the innocent, and how fear and power combined are the strongest incentives to crime; and S. Dunstan was an object of fear in more ways than one; the voice of the Church was with him, and the people sided with the Church; therefore it was easy to perceive that until he was effectually quieted there was no hope of ascendancy for Edwin. He whose words had, in the last reign, been to the people the harbinger of justice, through whose judicious management both the temporal and spiritual well-being of the state had been promoted and furthered, was not likely to pass away from memory as from sight. Add to this, that the partner of Edwin's sin was also at hand to urge by her influence the necessity of strong measures, to break the indomitable spirit of the conscientious prelate, and put a stop to his interference. Why I cannot tell, but S. Dunstan seems to

have been more hated and persecuted by the royal party than archbishop Odo, although the latter took, from the first, a prominent part against Elgiva, and, immediately after the coronation, subjected the king to the inconvenience of lesser excommunication, on account of the connexion.^k It is possible that as Odo had been more about the king's person than S. Dunstan, and was, at one period of his life, able to restrain him, Edwin retained a greater degree of respect for the "good archbishop ;^l" or, it may be that S. Dunstan's strong character was looked upon by Edwin as the real obstacle to his licentious conduct, he being to the clergy of his time as the keystone to the arch, and his master mind, present or absent, their main support against the royal faction. The first measures taken to injure S. Dunstan after his return to Glastonbury, were of a secret nature, the result of a deep laid scheme of malice ; it was attempted to turn the tide of popular feeling against him by false rumours of his conduct, and, this failing, the plan was to create disaffection among his monks, by poisoning their minds ; which attempt also signally failed : a thing the more to be wondered at, when we remember what a monastic establishment is ; that all within its walls are not equally right minded, and some far otherwise, that although it is a virtual forsaking of the world, there is a little world within which cannot be altogether annihilated, that all carry some failings into it, that some who enter find they have mistaken their calling, that the strict rules by which they are bound do not necessarily make them spiritually minded, and

^k Collier.

^l Saxon Chron. A.D. 961. S. Dunstan never passed by his monument but he kneeled down and gave him the title of "good." Cressy.

that to such enough of temptation and opportunity remains for the exercise of the worst passions of their nature, if they are not earnest in subduing them.

How much must depend upon the abbot of such an institution, the pastor of this miniature fold ! How holy he should be, how sound in judgment, how clear-sighted, and how cautious in his manner of enforcing the rule by which he governs, so as to gain the love of his monks without letting down its strictness. It is a cheering proof of what S. Dunstan was, that nothing could break the tie that united the little brotherhood at Glastonbury to their dear father and guide ; neither calumny nor argument, no, nor secret bribe from the highest quarter in the land ! But it was easier to raise the neighbouring thanes against him, (for the good always have enemies among the lawless,) and some of these were soon ready, and on the alert for mischief ; liking, may be, the excitement of galloping over S. Dunstan's ecclesiastical patrimony, and carrying away the cattle. Nor did they stop here ; the thirst of plunder once roused, the abbey itself was next attacked, and means taken to secure the person of its beloved abbot. But now they missed their mark, for, by the aid of his friends, he was apprised of his danger, and made his escape ; after which he wandered from place to place, until, without any hope of a safe asylum in England, he at last crossed over to Flanders, followed even to the sea beach by his relentless enemies. They reached the shore before the ship which conveyed him was out of sight ; had he lingered they would have captured him, and deprived him of the precious gift of sight, for they had orders to take out his eyes ! But

there was One who protected him, and wafted the vessel which carried him safely to the opposite coast, where he was received in the most honourable way by earl Arnulf,^m and soon after retired into a neighbouring monastery, that of Amande, near Ghent. I wish we had more materials for following the career of the wretched Edwin; it would be instructive, if painful. It is true that strange and startling facts are scattered over the few brief notices of his reign, but none of the incidents or circumstances that connect them are supplied; we have no means of looking behind the scenes, we can only read the usual lesson of sin and its punishment; unchecked passions, temporary success, then retribution, in the shape of overwhelming difficulties and sorrows, and the end, a broken heart. We find that archbishop Odo kept up his opposition, that the excommunication of the king subjected him to great inconvenience, which induced him to give up his favourite, but it was only for a time; the lady's influence remained, and, having instigated S. Dunstan's persecution, she next persuaded the king to revenge her cause upon the clergy in general, by depriving the monasteries, and turning the monks adrift. Abingdon and Glastonbury suffered most; Malmesbury was also dismantled, after being 270 years established. Many of the others were merely religious houses, occupied by irregular clergy, who, as they were themselves living sinful lives at this time, were less obnoxious to the royal zeal.ⁿ Archbishop Odo at length came forward in a stronger character, and insisted upon a separation

^m "A prince full of piety and devotion." Cressy. He was the son of Ethelfrith, daughter to king Alfred.

ⁿ See the account of the degeneracy of the clergy, in the next lecture.

between Edwin and Elgiva: having been reluctantly obeyed, he seized the refractory woman, had her married upon the firebrand with a hot iron, and banished her to Ireland. Whether she was married at this time I really cannot say, some accounts placing the marriage at the time of the coronation, and others putting it off until three years after.

Nothing shews more plainly the nature of the struggle in which I have already alluded in the beginning of this lecture, than such an act as Odo's, following as it does, too, upon the repeated and aggravated insults cast upon the Church by the government. Backed by the Roman see, the Church now had power to judge, denounce, carry out her own sentence: Church law was by law established; but such coercion as Odo used seems scarcely consistent with her real character. Odo was, it would appear, bold to rebuke vice, honest and single-minded, and too faithful to shrink from consequences, as far as he was himself concerned; but, while we admire his firmness, we must blame the lengths to which his zeal led him; it was undoubtedly carried too far; it did not even convince the erring king, it only maddened him. More worthy of imitation was the conduct of Laurentius with Eadbald, mentioned in an earlier part of this history. Tears, entreaties, and, when these fail, rebuke and excommunication, seem to be the true weapons of the Church; should all prove unavailing, there remain to the faithful priest vigils, fasts, and prayers, but not violence; the world sways by coercion, the Church by higher and nobler powers; if she find herself sinking under accumulated insults, it is simply her trial, for her vocation is suffering; there

is One who will avenge her cause when, and where, and as it pleases Him, without Whose Will none can harm her ; Whose Will it often is that her weakness should be her strength. I can scarcely bring myself to pass this judgment on the “good archbishop” without great pain, and the fear of seeming presumptuous, but as I have undertaken to give my own impressions in so many other cases, it would be uncandid to withhold them here.

To return to king Edwin. His power was now “tottering to its fall ;” storm upon storm spent its fury upon him, faction upon faction perplexed and baffled him. There were the many wandering monks with their unhoused heads and unredressed wrongs ; and they had the sympathy of the people, for the monk was the poor man’s friend. There was an exhausted treasury ; it had been long supplied by exactions and frauds, Church monies, plunder from the lands of the thanes, and lapsed inheritances ; ° a total loss of confidence prevailed in the country generally, all was unsettled, and every one was dissatisfied and restless. Among other enormities attributed to the young prince at this time was that of depriving his grandmother Eadgiva of her whole property ; in short, his necessities were pressing, and he was not very scrupulous in supplying them. He perhaps wished to govern well, but his associates in the burden of the state were ill-calculated to be of any real use to him ; they had countenanced his sin, and those who connive at vice in others often cannot restrain these or themselves when it is plainly their

° It is read of him that he also took from the Church what he might. . . . He also used such tyranny and unlawful means to his subjects, that lastly they rebelled against him, &c. Fabian.

best policy to do so ; for the course of vice, like a rolling stone, receives an impetus in its downward career which makes every effort to control its progress vain.

But, while we blame Edwin, let us not refuse pity to him, or think him worse than we should many of us become without the upholding grace of God. His error was the rejection of that grace—the one false step in the outset of his reign ; but for this he might have reigned well and happily. He was very young, and his character unformed, and that one act of resistance to a Divinely appointed authority was his ruin, for it led to all the others. Some modern historians, willing to palliate his fault, and, in their usual fashion, to condemn the Church, lay much stress on Henry of Huntingdon's character of this prince ; but, after all, his single evidence in Edwin's favour does not amount to much. He calls him “ not undeserving of praise in managing the sceptre of the land ;” and afterwards adds, “ king Edwin, in the fifth year of his reign, when his kingdom began at first most decently to flourish, had his prosperous and pleasant beginnings broken off by untimely death.^p” Abbot Brompton gives the following widely different account of him :—“ he was a man that was very much an enemy to God and the kingdom ; he hated his own people and honoured his enemies ; he consumed the treasures of the Church to his own disgrace and the peril of his soul.”

Let us briefly sum up his misfortunes, leaving it to the candid mind to settle the amount of pity or blame which is his due. He had a younger brother, called Edgar, who had been made sub-king of Mercia in the

^p See Fuller, p. 199.

beginning of the reign, and was yet but fourteen years old. Finding themselves so harassed under Edwin's government, the minds of the people turned to him, and there was an universal feeling in favour of dethroning the king and putting Edgar in his room. The Danes rose, as usual, and joined the popular outcry, and, in an unexpected hour, Edwin found himself deprived of the best half of his dominions ; for all that part north of Thames was, after a year's fighting, ceded to Edgar, and a council of thanes met to elect him king. In the midst of this confusion, which left Edwin but the shadow of authority, (his own Wessex, though nominally faithful, continuing to be the very centre of anarchy,) Odo and the clergy supported their lawful sovereign and not the usurper of his rights, notwithstanding his superiority to the unhappy Edwin, and that he had been, in the year 957, solemnly proclaimed king over Mercia ; but they would not countenance Edwin's excesses, and when the partner of his guilt returned from her exile, and persisted in rejoining her husband, a fresh opposition began to be re-enacted, which ended in the wretched woman's death, under the most cruel torments, inflicted by a body of archbishop Odo's retainers, who fell in with her near Gloucester, either while accompanying Edwin's flight to that city or on her way to join him there. There is no foundation to the gross statement which makes the archbishop himself a party to the outrage committed. Her death is supposed to have taken place in the year 958 ; and in the following the unhappy Edwin went to his own account, sinking, it is said, under his accumulated sorrows. His brother succeeded peaceably to the sovereignty of the whole kingdom.

LECTURE XXI.

A.D. 959—975.

THE REIGN OF EDGAR.

WHEN I said I should not enter upon the question of the celibacy of the clergy, I meant controversially ; I did not mean that I could quite pass it over without any notice, the events of the next reign make this impossible as you will see ; but my remarks will be limited to what is necessary in order to explain the actual history. Nor will you be quite unprepared to see the matter in its true light after following, as you have done, the history of the Church and country together. You cannot but be aware, I think, without having heard it said in so many words, that up to the time of the overwhelming ravages committed by the Danes, marrying amongst the clergy must have been very rare ; and this conviction would arise simply from the knowledge you have gained of the habits of the first teachers of the faith in Britain, their living together in choirs, or bodies of twelve, in imitation of the blessed Apostles, under rule, and their being subsequently formed as their numbers increased into monastic establishments, such as that at Bangor Iscoed, (where two thousand and upwards were within the walls at once,) S. Augustine's at Canterbury, and other similar institutions. But it

does appear, that with the necessity of a more numerous ecclesiastical body, many of whom held offices of a meaner kind than the regular priests, there was a less rigid rule enforced, and the lesser orders of the clergy married, if they pleased ; submitting, however, to this condition, that whilst they were married men they were not eligible to a higher degree :^a they could not be “ mass priests.”^b This was the law of the early British Church, as well as of the Anglo-Saxon branch founded by S. Augustine. But with the miseries of the times under Danish devastations arose another state of things ; whole parishes became destitute of spiritual care, and the clergy were so scattered and so few, that the lower orders of them frequently received ordination to supply the sore and urgent needs of the people. Thus, the bishop of Durham ordained the married clerks who accompanied the body of S. Cuthbert from Lindisfarne, and his example having been followed elsewhere, the law of celibacy was forgotten, except by the stricter few ; and the married clergy settling themselves down on the lands of the minsters or monasteries, and serving the Churches in those districts, soon became a large and influential body, although living in the breach of those regulations on the keeping of which their title to the possession of this property was originally granted. After awhile the neglect of rule paved the way for dissipation and excess, and, besides being married, (a state in which they might have lived really holy lives,) they became a dissolute set, drinking, gaming, and

^a See “The Cymry,” chap. xxi. p. 287 ; and pope Gregory’s reply to S. Augustine’s questions, Bede’s Eccles. Hist. Dr. Giles’s translation, p. 41.

^b That is, of the order of “ priest,” the chief distinction of which is the power of celebrating the Holy Communion, or “ Mass.”

going through their duties in the most slovenly manner, often neglecting them altogether.* In this way, and by such men, were the most sacred functions administered in S. Dunstan's time, and the sacraments and holy places desecrated; and if S. Dunstan, and those who revered and followed him, contrasted these disorders with the uncompromising, self-sacrificing affection of those who, in England's brighter days, left all to follow their Lord and tend His flock, "father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters,"^d is it any wonder that they believed a return to the old strictness desirable, nay, even necessary, if there was to be a thorough reform? Is it any wonder that, with the laws of celibacy unrepealed by the Church, they were conscientiously opposed to a married priesthood? How far the reform which they meditated was practicable, as things were, or expedient, as we should now judge, I will leave it to others to decide.

Meanwhile it is of importance to inquire whether S. Dunstan returned from his banishment during Edwin's life, or at his death; whether in 958 or 959? And this, because his character would seem to be in some degree affected by his giving an apparent sanction to

* The misery which they (the Danes) had inflicted in former reigns, had not only impoverished the English, but corrupted their morals. The clergy were remiss in their duties, and very ignorant. . . . they thought it enough to go through the ceremony of mass, without any preaching, and to marry, and bury, and receive their tithes. Their tastes, as might be expected, were of the most vulgar; forty years later we may reckon upon some amendment, but we find Elfric still entreating that they would not frequent the wine houses, nor covet the office of sheriff. Dissection of the Saxon Chron. pp. 43, 44. See also king Edgar's speech, further on in the lecture. And Saxon Chron. year 963:—"Then he (Ethelwold) made many minsters, and drove the clerks out of the bishopric, because they would not observe *any rule*," &c. Rapin admits, "though it is but too true the priests at that time led very disorderly lives." "Archbishop Boniface observes, that drunkenness was so common in his time, that even the bishops, instead of preventing, were partakers in it themselves," &c. Note to king Edgar's reign, in Will. of Malmesbury.

^d S. Luke xiv. 26.

Edgar's rebellion. The Saxon Chronicle places his recal in 959, at the time of Edwin's decease,^e and although Collier, who is generally honest and fair, is prejudiced against S. Dunstan, on the supposition of his being in England at an earlier moment, still the fact that many modern historians have not ventured so far, when they would be glad enough to do so, is strongly in favour of an opposite view.

As soon as he was recalled, Edgar convened a council at Bradford, who unanimously selected him to fill the see of Worcester, to which archbishop Odo consecrated him.^f This last fact is also in S. Dunstan's favour, for we know that Odo did not forsake Edwin to the latest moment of his life. Edgar's conduct to him, at this time, was an earnest of his subsequent career; he was a prince of much promise;—surnamed "the Peaceable," he was peaceable in the best way; not through weakness, or infirmity of purpose, but he won peace by his resolute, prompt, and judicious measures against his enemies in the very beginning of his reign, by which he forestalled any attempts they may have planned to disturb his power. He is generally thought to have been liked by the Danes, and to have spent much of his early childhood amongst them, under the care of Ethelwyn, Guthrum's widow, in East Anglia,^g by whom he was educated. If this statement be correct, his knowledge of their unsettled, treacherous temperament will have put him on his guard against them, and to his early training we may, perhaps, attribute that laxity in

^e See also Fabian.

^f Fuller's Church Hist. p. 200. But some accounts make Odo die in 958, the year before Edwin's death and before Dunstan's consecration.

^g See Lappenburg's Hist. vol. ii. p. 136. Compare p. 106.

his morals which has destroyed the lustre of his fairest actions.

It is probable that Edgar was led as much by policy as by preference when he placed S. Dunstan at once at the head of government ; it must have been evident to him how strongly the current of public opinion ran in his favour, and his abilities as a statesman had been but too well tested ; all had flourished under his direction, all had decayed at his removal. Besides which, it was still customary to class the clergy with the first in all matters, temporal and spiritual, and the people yet retained, in the midst of their irregularities, as much of what modern writers call superstition, as invested the priestly order with a sort of awfulness of character, which they dared not forget ; they could not go to war against Heaven's professed delegates, for fear a retributive vengeance should overtake them even in this life, and they believed in the intercessory power which these possessed to avert danger from the good, and bring down punishment on the wicked. A proof of this exists in the notion which then prevailed, that the unhappy Edwin's soul was at rest through the prayers of S. Dunstan. But, whatever causes we assign for the fact, it is, I believe, universally allowed that S. Dunstan's influence was the "soul of Edgar's reign."

This young prince made it his first care to strengthen his naval force, and three thousand six hundred is the number given of the ships that were kept in readiness to sail to different parts of the coast. The king himself every year, at Easter, took a voyage with his fleet all round the island. Equally prudent were his inland regulations. The magistrates set over the people hav-

ing become unjust and tyrannical, he made a progress annually through the provinces, redressing wrongs, and fining and dismissing the offenders. Finding that the Welsh^b no longer paid their accustomed tribute, he marched an army into north Wales, and having compelled the submission of its kings, Howel and Iago, he commuted the money fine into requiring, yearly, the heads of three hundred wolves from these princes, and a certain number of wolves tongues were likewise to be paid, in some cases of felony, instead of money; and this wise and prudent regulation had the effect of exterminating these destructive animals within three years. Some years afterwards he interfered again to settle a dispute between the above-named kings, upon which occasion he founded a Church at Bangor, which was dedicated in honour of the blessed Virgin, and then proceeding to Chester, (where he had appointed six more kings to meet him,) the event took place which has been so much celebrated, and which has more the air of a fairy tale than a reality. Going to the monastery of S. John the Baptist by the way of the river Dee, his barge was rowed down the stream by these eight kings, Edgar himself presiding at the helm. The names of the six that have not yet been mentioned were Kennethⁱ of Scotland, Malcolm of Cumberland, Mackus,^k lord of the Isles and king of Man, Sifert, Dynfwal or Dufnal, and Ithel; the three last being of the old British race.

^b I cannot fix the true dates of the events which follow. I think Edgar must have marched to Wales on two if not three occasions, besides sending a fleet there. See Humphrey Lloyd's Hist. p. 62, year 972 A.D.

ⁱ It is denied by some that he was Edwin's contemporary. In Sir John Prise's Hist. of Wales Kenneth is mentioned, but in the older book, by Humphrey Lloyd, from which his was compiled, I cannot find any mention of the fact in question; but his name occurs in Collier, Fuller, Lappenburg, &c.

^k "That prince of pirates." William of Malmesbury.

And not only were his laws just, as regarded the state, but he also seconded S. Dunstan in the important matter of Church reform, to which that holy man gave his best energies from the moment of his recal from Flanders. Odo died about this time, but not until he and his tried friend, S. Dunstan, had met under very different circumstances from those in which they parted. Then Odo foretold S. Dunstan's elevation to the metropolitan dignity, when he himself should have been laid to rest with the cross upon his breast and the crosier by his side. This might seem more a probability than a prophecy, and yet S. Dunstan was not chosen archbishop immediately upon Odo's death ; two others were put before him, Elfsin,¹ who was frozen to death in crossing the Alps on his way to Rome for his pall, and Brythelm, who was afterwards thought unfit for so responsible a post,^m and requested to resign ; a demand which he either had not the will or the power to resist.

In 961 S. Dunstan started on his journey to Rome, to receive his own pall, which was now coming to be thought needful for the full authority of his office. He was most kindly welcomed by John XIII. then occupying the papal chair, who entered fully and cordially into all his designs for the English Church, and gave a sanction to them.

I must now tell you the bitterest ingredient in S. Dunstan's cup of prosperity ; nothing less than his royal master's utter disregard of the restrictions of religion upon a subject in which the holiest feelings and sympathies of our nature are involved. Edgar, it is true,

¹ Into S. Odo's place a most unworthy successor intruded himself." Cressy.

^m "He was too modest, humble, and kind to restrain, as he ought, the *haughty and rebellious* under the lash of correction." Roger of Wendover, *otherwise Matt. of Westminster*.

did not, like his unhappy brother, set decency at defiance, but he was equally unchaste ; he was in heart a libertine. Perhaps he thought by his submission to the Church, and his many acts of piety, to atone for this frightful vice, or, as I have said before, he may have learned his loose morals among the Danes ; but the confused accounts of the early historians give us no clue to the cause of the gross contradiction between his outward reverence of conduct and his secret excesses : they only leave the painful facts on record, as a beacon to those who think to gain Heaven without giving up a favourite sin. The detail of such crimes as are laid to his charge would be worse than unprofitable ; it is sufficient to say that they were numerous, inexcusable, and, I much fear, prolonged through a great part of his reign. Some, however, I must mention, since they bear upon other particulars which you ought to be acquainted with. One of his worst actions was the violation of a religious house, by the carrying off of a young female of rank, called Wulfrith, who, after the manner of that period, was receiving her education within its walls. Poor Wulfrith ! she afterwards took the veil in the same retreat where her innocence had been so cruelly invaded, and, thankfully hiding there her sorrow and shame, brought up her infant daughter in those holy principles which had consoled her own bitter and blighted feelings ; and Edith inherited, not the stain left on her birth by her unprincipled father, but her mother's purity and truth, for her name is enrolled among the saints.

This offence of Edgar's was a sore trial to S. Dunstan, it involved the sin of sacrilege as well as un-

chastity ; and his deportment towards the king after hearing of it, was what might be expected from the fearlessness he had ever shewn when the interests of religion were at stake. "I will not be at peace with him who is God's enemy," was his indignant reply to Edgar's offers of friendliness, at their next meeting. Edgar gazed at his faithful counsellor with surprise for one minute, but in the next gave way to shame, and, overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, threw himself in tears at the archbishop's feet. And S. Dunstan, the unbending S. Dunstan ! he too wept. But, though touched in his softer feelings by the king's unexpected compunction, he did not shrink from the painful duty which now devolved upon him : he imposed seven years' penance upon the king, two days of rigorous fasting in each week being a part of it, he was not to wear his crown during the whole period, he was to give increased doles to the poor, to found and endow a monastery at his sole expense, to revise the laws, and publish a new code, and to cause copies of the Holy Scriptures to be made and circulated throughout the whole kingdom. A doubt has been raised as to whether Edgar was ever really crowned until after this penance had been accomplished ; there is no account of his coronation, and one writer asserts that it was put off from time to time because of his excesses, and that the solemn anointing which took place at Bath, in the sixteenth year of his reign, and after the fulfilment of his seven years' penance, was his first inauguration to the regal dignity with the ceremonies of the Church.ⁿ It would be satisfactory if

ⁿ See William of Malmesbury. Also in Mortimer's Hist. there is the following, although no reference is made to the authority from whence he

this could be shewn to have been the case, to undo the impression on the minds of many that the Church, enriched and upheld by king Edgar, treated his vices with too much leniency ; however I am confident that no such feeling can rest for a moment on your minds. Another act of Edgar is rather that of a heathen than a Christian prince. Wishing to form a second marriage, after the death of his first wife, he sent earl Ethelwold on a mission to obtain for him the hand of a very beautiful young lady, called Elfrida, the daughter of earl Ordgar. Ethelwold, captivated by her loveliness, sought her alliance for himself, and on his return to the king, told him she was not nearly so well-looking as had been represented ; upon which Edgar gave up all thoughts of her. Finding afterwards that he had been deceived, he revenged himself on Ethelwold with his own hand, and shortly after married Elfrida. Ethelwold deserved his fate, but a Christian king should execute justice as justice, in lawful court, and not, even when wronged, become an assassin. His acts should not be those of passion, but of wise and just judgment. Edgar may have doubted whether law would take the life of the offender, and leave Elfrida a widow, or he may have been anxious to gratify his own feeling of revenge ; either motive leaves his act unjustifiable.

We will now take a short review of the more immediate measures in favour of the Church to which Edgar was a party. Soon after S. Dunstan became archbishop of Canterbury he raised his friend Ethelwold to the

derives it. "Edgar was so continually repeating offences of this kind, that it was not until the latter end of his reign that there could be found a proper time to crown him ; it not being deemed lawful to use the rite of unction in the case of a prince subject to canonical censure and in a state of penance."

rank of bishop of Winchester, and, hearing much of the holiness of Oswald, a nephew of Odo, who had been for some time at the convent at Fleury in France, whither he went with the sole view of perfecting himself in the Benedictine rule, he made him his successor in the see of Worcester ; for he felt that in the matter of Church reform he might place full confidence on the co-operation of these two with himself. Then having gained the authority of the pope for what he intended to do, he caused king Edgar to summon a council, at which the clergy and great men of the realm were present, when the king opened the proceedings by making an oration, of which I will tell you the main points. He began by calling the attention of such as were there to the prosperity of the kingdom, which he was sure they would acknowledge to be an undeserved blessing, and that, therefore, gratitude was due for this mercy to the supreme Author of all things ; then he summed up his own duties as sovereign of so fair a country, while he contended that the duty of reforming abuses among the clergy belonged rather to his “ witan ” or wise men than to himself ; that it was for them to see that these were sober, temperate, and chaste, kind to the poor, and constant in their instructions to the people. “ Had care been had,” he said, “ that the life and conversation of the clergy was what it ought to be, I should not now have to hear on all sides of the enormity of their crimes.” He would pass over their irregularities and repeated breaches of the canons, and allude only to their scandalous lives. Then followed a fearful picture of sins but too common among the clergy of that day. “ Was it for this,” said the king, “ that our ancestors

gave their wealth and their lands ? Was it to furnish priests with dogs and hawks, and provide for their luxurious living ? The people complain in private, the soldiers in public ; the sins of the clergy are sung in the streets and exhibited upon the stage, and you, who should remove the scandal, connive at it !” Then Edgar urged on the council a return to the holy zeal of former times, and that they should speedily clear the country of such abuses ; and, turning to such of the bishops as were there assembled, “ Do you use the sword of S. Peter, he added, and I will take that of Constantine.” Afterwards, in a personal appeal to S. Dunstan, he spoke as if his deceased father were present, and suggested how much pained he would have felt at the sight of such degeneracy in the priesthood, and he ended by solemnly committing the task of reform to S. Dunstan, Ethelwold, and Oswald. This speech must have caused great displeasure to many members of the assembly, but no open opposition was made to it ; those whose opinions or practices it condemned contented themselves with secretly organizing a determined system of resistance to anything that S. Dunstan might project, and resolving to throw every impediment in the way of his success. It is at this crisis that the names of his friends come more prominently forward than his own for their zealous persevering efforts to clear the minsters or monasteries of the married clergy, and they are accused of taking the most bigotted and cruel method of effecting what they wished, of compelling some to assume the monastic habit as a condition of retaining their benefices, and of turning out all who would not be so coerced upon the wide world, homeless and poor. That,

whether the clergy might marry or not, married priests could have no right to property granted originally to monks, seems very clear, and a little reflection will shew such assertions to be really but half statements, although partially true. What Ethelwold and Oswald did effect was this :—on the appointment of the former to Winchester, he began his task of reforming his Church most leniently, only removing the scandalous characters, and bestowing their livings on the curates who had been employed by them, as an encouragement to them to lead better lives. By this means he hoped gradually to clear away all gross offenders, and replace them by a more conscientious set. But the possession of increased wealth rather stimulated the new clerks to imitate the luxury of their predecessors than to greater strictness, and at the end of two years things were worse than ever, and a strong party had been formed against Ethelwold, who were quite determined to maintain their ground. What, then, must have been their surprise to see their bishop enter one day the old Minster Church, attended by a royal deputy, who carried a number of cowls in his hands. “Put on these,” said Ethelwold, or leave the Church for ever!^o” Their astonishment and anger was of little avail, for they were allowed no time to hesitate, the royal commission was before them, and remonstrance vain. Three, probably unmarried men, remained, and sullenly assumed the cowl, and the

^o Malmesbury “de Pont,” l. ii. f. 139. “At length Ethelwold, (with whom our present business is,) having first procured the king’s sanction, the canons of Winchester were suddenly required to renounce their wives, or give place to the regular monks. This was, probably, by way of example only; and it is clear that a decent and seeming compliance was all that was ever enforced. But there is little doubt that many of these priests were profligate.” *Dissection of the Saxon Chronicle*, p. 45.

rest dispersed themselves, to vent their displeasure as they best could elsewhere.

This fact has, at first sight, a great appearance of cruelty, or rather severity, but why do historians conceal the redeeming circumstances? Ethelwold provided for all these unhappy men and their families upon the episcopal manors.^p His heart was not closed to their sufferings, although he was resolute to cleanse the Church from their impurities, and to enforce what he held to be its laws. In a similar way did he expel the priests from the New Minster, and from the monasteries of Chertsey and Milton, supplying their places by monks from Abingdon and Glastonbury, and introducing the Benedictine rule. Oswald was less fortunate at Worcester, although he carried on in his diocese the same struggle against the secular clergy. S. Dunstan, too, had made some attempts to dislodge them, while he was bishop of the see, but his efforts had failed. At last Oswald was successful at the Old Minster, by this stratagem :—He built another cathedral close by, where the services were performed by regular monks, and which he always himself frequented ; the presence of the bishop drawing away the people, the old Church was deserted, and soon after many of the canons were induced to follow the example of their dean, and forsake the irregular for the regular body. In this manner the chapter gradually thinned in number, until the married clergy being all dispersed, the Old Minster fell back, naturally and quietly, under its first regulations.

^p “ Notwithstanding, in great compassion and kindness to the said disorderly canons, S. Ethelwold assigned for their maintenance *many lands* belonging to the Church, and those the nearest to the city and richest for revenues.” Cressy, quoting from William of Malmesbury.

Six other Churches were also reformed, but by what method this was brought about is not stated. It is very possible that Ethelwold and Oswald found the difficulties which attended their arrangements beyond their strength, for if they did not slacken their zeal for the honour of God's house, they changed their way of shewing it. Ethelwold passed the latter years of his life in rebuilding and restoring monasteries which had been entirely levelled to the ground, rather than in rescuing those in existence from misrule; and Oswald, after he was made archbishop of York, does not seem to have taken any active measure against the secular clergy. Nevertheless, to the last, these faithful servants of the Church inculcated in their teaching, and exemplified in their lives, that high and strict principle of holiness which it had been their earlier endeavour to enforce. In the course of the changes which they did effect, a number of foreign monks were introduced into England, and the clergy continuing to be a refractory and powerful body, those disputes between the regulars and seculars began, which, fed by mutual encroachments on each others rights and privileges, and mutual recriminations, soon grew into a great evil, which was productive of many bitter results. And because the charters and grants to the monasteries exempted them from the law of any but their own abbot within certain distances round, not allowing the bishop of the diocese to interfere in the villages and towns included by these boundaries, the Churches in the country generally were under two modes of government, some of them being served by seculars, or parish priests appointed by the bishop, and the others by regulars, or monks from the

neighbouring priory. I tell you this to supply the clue to the endless quarrels that afterwards arose, and which, having a shew of right on both sides, were very difficult to set at rest, and often continued through succeeding generations, descending like an inheritance from either party to his successors.

Little more remains to be said of Edgar. His anointing, in 973, has been already noticed, and he did not survive it two years. The effects of the long peace were not wholly beneficial to the nation, it made the country a resort for foreigners of all descriptions, who were encouraged by Edgar, and who soon, by their vicious habits, increased the immorality of life by which the English were at this time scandalized. Drinking long and deeply became so common, that S. Dunstan proposed to the king to limit this excess by law, and, in consequence, the flagons were all marked by one standard, and punishments awarded to those who exceeded the prescribed quantity. But, on the whole, the reign was most prosperous, and there was a great improvement in the administration of justice everywhere; property was respected, and lives were safe; if Edgar erred, it was on the side of severity, rather treating offenders too hardly than passing over crime without punishment. He left two sons, Edward and Ethelred, both of whom pretended to the throne. And now to sum up what he was in a few brief remarks. In person he was good looking, but very small in stature. It has been told of him that this diminutive size was made a jest by Kenneth of Scotland, at a banquet, who said, "that it was beneath the honour of the princes of this isle to be subject to that dandiprat

Edgar : " whereupon the king allured Kenneth into a wood, and challenged him to single combat, (thus shewing himself not at all afraid of his superior size and strength :) and Kenneth, surprised at his bravery, and ashamed of his own silly bragging, made an ample apology for his impertinence. It was by such qualities that Edgar won and kept that character of superiority, which, in his own day, was universally awarded to him. Alas, that his moral character should be so sullied! Some have thought it a difficult task to decide which were greater, his merits or his demerits ; but this difficulty must have arisen more from the position in which his biographers found themselves, than from any real impediment in the way of truth. If it is considered that during his reign Edgar had founded no less than forty-six monasteries,¹ that he stood by the monks through "evil report and good report," and that, whatever were his own errors, the cause of religion, justice, and right, had always been openly espoused by him, it is not singular that, when his biography was written by the very men whom he had so befriended, they shrunk from exposing to odium that sad side of his character, which, nevertheless, they were too honest to conceal ; that they dwelt more upon his virtues than his crimes ; that their gratitude and respect to their patron made them very unwilling to pass too severe a sentence upon him. And we should remember the feeling of respect which a belief in the Divine right of kings is sure to excite in deeply pious minds ; it would seem to such almost impious to breathe upon the reputation

¹ Camden's Remains.

² In one place forty-seven is the number given. Edgar intended, if he had lived, to endow fifty.

of one who had been so anointed and placed, unless driven by necessity to it, and those who could not commend would often prefer to be silent. I do not say that this is an excuse for any palliation of vice. But when the stream of time has swept away the insignia of royalty, and has left the house of its possessor tenantless and unroofed, when the brow that bore the crown is in the dust, and the hand in which the sceptre was placed powerless and decayed, then it is the man whom we consider, *as a man*, and not the king, for our respect to his office is transferred ; he is no longer a king, no longer set as a sign to his people of a higher and more perfect sovereignty ; our concern is not with his rank but with himself. And so we who now live must read of Edgar's greatness and shudder, of his acts of piety and tremble. As certainly as he was a great king, as certainly he was an impure and sinful man. There are, strictly, but two classes in the Church of God, those who obey and those who disobey His laws, and men of celebrity must be ranked with the one or the other. I will not say that Edgar died as he lived, impenitent ; this were to judge him hardly, but I will say that there is a broad black stain upon his name, such as none of his good works can cancel.

LECTURE XXII.

A.D. 975—979.

THE REIGN OF EDWARD THE MARTYR.

IN the year 975 a great council was called, for the vacant crown was to be bestowed, and all ranks and parties, princes, clergy, earls, thanes, and Danes, were deeply interested in the event; so there was a stir throughout the country generally, and the public mind was fully occupied. Now as to these occupations, we may well imagine that they were various; the earls and thanes looked to the state of their retinues and the strength of their castles and defences, the clergy held consultations together, and sounded the feelings both of their patrons and the people, and the friends of the young princes went hither and thither, canvassing, arguing, promising, or threatening, as the case might be. Some there were, but I fear they were the few, who looked seriously towards the future, watched the heavy clouds which were collecting together from all quarters of the political horizon with anxiety and apprehension, and, in the stillness of their hearts and homes, prayed for their unhappy country, that the evils of civil war might be diverted from it, and the Divine judgments suspended. In the court great confusion prevailed, two distinct parties maintaining, with equal ob-

stinacy, the rights of the two princes ; the first, and with these we may reckon S. Dunstan and most of the bishops, claiming for the eldest son Edward the title of king, the second, a powerful faction, headed by the queen mother, bringing forward the young Ethelred, a child of seven years old, and calling on the people to recognise in him the lawful inheritor of his father's dignity. In the provinces disturbances had already begun between the two orders of clergy, the seculars and regulars. Writhing as did the former under the unflinching strictness of S. Dunstan's ecclesiastical rule, it was evident that now was their time for making a united effort to set aside his authority in Church and state. In an interregnum it is always difficult to ensure the administration of the laws, or to stop the audacious from encroaching on the disputed territory. Scarcely, then, had Edgar left this world, when, backed by the aid of Elfer, duke of Mercia, the seculars were reinstated in their old benefices, turning the brethren adrift who had been placed there by Ethelwold. At this crisis of affairs the council met, being hurried forward with all possible speed by the heads of government, lest any delay might bring on greater difficulties. -

And yet that the right was on the side of Edward there could be no doubt, for he had been named to succeed in his father's will, he was the eldest son, and there was neither reason nor justice in the pleas for setting him aside ; the plea of his illegitimacy, brought forward by the opposite faction, resting on no true foundation, and the argument that he was not the heir, because, at the time of his birth, his father was uncrowned, being equally applicable to the case of his

younger brother. But although S. Dunstan and all the bishops upheld Edward's cause, things might have taken an unfavourable turn for him, had not the archbishop acted with his usual energy and foresight. Finding that the "witan," when met, could not agree which prince to elect, and that the confusion was every moment greater, he suddenly withdrew from the assembly, and reappeared, attired in the sacred vestments of his office, leading Edward by the hand, with the cross carried before him. This decided the contest; loud cries of enthusiasm rent the air, Edward was acknowledged king, and, lest there should be a change in the popular feeling, S. Dunstan conducted his young charge at once to Kingston, where he performed the ceremony of the anointing without delay. This firm way of acting checked for awhile all the hopes of the opposing party, and restored peace to the kingdom.

But not so easily was the Church question settled. With Edgar had departed a large portion of S. Dunstan's influence, for king Edward, as a minor, was regarded rather as the tool of the archbishop than as his patron, and the rebellion of the secular clergy, in Mercia, only paved the way for fresh disturbances in other parts of the kingdom. There are so few writers of this period, and they omit so many particulars, that it is not very easy to give a clear narrative of all that passed; one thing is certain, that Elfre's malice was successful, and that the monks in Mercia were not restored to the monasteries. But earl Ethelwin, and several other nobles, espoused their cause warmly in East Anglia, and even raised an army to prevent their *expulsion* from that province. An incidental reference

to a nobleman of that time is almost affecting ; he appears to have fallen a victim to party feeling, and to have suffered in the cause of truth and justice. The Saxon Chronicle says :—

“ Then was in Mercia,
As I have heard,
Widely and everywhere
The glory of the Lord
Laid low in earth :
Many were expelled,
Sage servants of God.”

• • • •
“ Then men His law broke,
And then was driven out

The beloved hero
Oslac from this land,
O'er the rolling waters,
O'er the gannet's path ;
Hoary-haired hero,
Wise and word-skilled,
O'er the water's throng,
O'er the whale's domain,
Of home bereaved.”

Oslac was evidently virtuous and beloved. He was earl over that part of Northumberland which still retained the name of Deīra.

In the midst of these troubles a famine prevailed : it was looked upon as the punishment of sin ; and if, as has been said, the people now sided with the irregularities of the secular clergy and opposed the efforts made by holy men to raise the Church to the glory of her former state, it might be well that they were taught another lesson by suffering. And who, during that time of sorrow, were their friends ? It is certain that the self-denying Ethelwold, whose exertions to purify the Church in Mercia had so lately been upset and counteracted, was one of the most prominent of them. Indeed his munificence to the poor was unbounded, and during the worst of the distress he was even induced by compassion to break up and coin the gold and silver vessels belonging to the diocese, giving as his motive that “ it was not well for the insensible temples of God to abound in riches while the living temples starved for hunger.”

The character of Ethelwold is so perfect that I shall be pardoned for saying a little more about it. I have told you how he was associated with S. Dunstan at Glastonbury and shared his friendship and confidence, but not that he was also in early life the companion of S. Neot. From him he learnt the true secret of the Christian life, and the source from whence its strength is derived : "to sit at the feet of Jesus." "Do I then," added S. Neot, "recommend idleness? Nay, for life is short, and labour is profitable, and idleness is destructive to the soul; the choice is in the kind of work. Our work is the spiritual work, to subdue the flesh, and live after the Spirit, to do the things of the Spirit.*" And Ethelwold's life was consistent with this precept. Looking back over what remains of it, it is difficult to say which appears most striking, the number of his schemes of usefulness or their comprehensiveness. In restoring Church discipline his zeal has been already remarked; as an architect his knowledge was only equalled by his enthusiasm and magnificence. Winchester Cathedral and the monastery at Peterborough were specimens of this talent, where the great wheel, full of bells and laid over with gold, was made by him, and two of the bells cast with his own hands: and he was a musician, a mathematician, and an author. Yet was his chief object the promotion of education everywhere, knowing that ignorance led too often to sin; and the scholars in his collegiate establishment, at Winchester, received a solid groundwork of learning which distinguished them afterwards wherever they went. In the midst of these varied and im-

* "Lives of the English Saints."

portant avocations he found time for relieving the poor, and the instruction of little children, whom he would make very happy, by telling them pleasant anecdotes to illustrate his teaching, and I am not sure that he did not illustrate it sometimes by presents of nuts and apples : there is, I think, a tradition to that effect somewhere. Such qualities gained for Ethelwold the title, in his own day, of the "benevolent bishop," and justly was it earned. He lived to the year 984, his friend and spiritual father, archbishop Dunstan, attending him in his last sickness, and closing his eyes on this world.

Soon after Edward's accession to the throne a council was called at Winchester, and there the question of Church discipline was again brought forward, and argued with considerable excitement on both sides ; the secular clergy mustering all their friends to maintain their cause against S. Dunstan and his friends. It is thought that the married priests would have gained their point, on this occasion, but for an incident of which I can offer no explanation. Seeing that his arguments were overborne and that the married priests had gained the sympathies of the council, S. Dunstan begged for a pause for the purpose of silent prayer ; at this moment words were heard to issue from a crucifix, which was hung in the room where the council was held, and, in allusion to the pending decision in favour of the continuance of the clergy in the monasteries, the crucifix was supposed to pronounce the following sentence :—"it must not be, it must not be ; you have already decided rightly, it is not well to change." I am not inclined to believe this to be a miracle, appearances are strongly against it ; but S. Dunstan's character ought to place him above

the suspicions in which modern writers indulge themselves. Nevertheless, miracle or mystery, it turned the scale of public feeling, and the seculars experienced a total defeat.

It was necessary, a little time after, to call another council, which sat at Kirtlington, where nothing material was decided ; but what is said of its proceedings leaves the impression that there was a daily increasing confusion in Church affairs in different parts of the kingdom, in spite of the repeated victories gained by S. Dunstan, and a fast-growing opposition to his power. Three years had elapsed since Edward's coronation without producing any remedy to these evils. Still the archbishop worked steadily and patiently forward in the path of reform, hoping amid discouragements, and persevering almost against hope. Perhaps his utter inability to stem the tide of rebellion at this period, even with the royal favour on his side, is the best proof that his weapons were those of argument and entreaty rather than of harshness and force.

At a third council, which was summoned at Calne, in Wiltshire, this energetic man endeavoured, once more, to press upon his country the necessity of a return to Church discipline : it was his last public effort in the cause. Unlike the Dunstan of former days, and sinking in health and strength, he felt himself all unequal to meet the torrent of argument by which the adverse party assailed him. And the circumstance that he was opposed on this occasion by a Scottish prelate, called Beornhelm, a man of weight and character, must have deeply pained him ; for what is so difficult to bear as the disapprobation of the good ? It may have been this

unusual element in the present assembly that fell like a crushing weight on S. Dunstan's spirit, and caused him to urge with sadness his inability to struggle any longer against his antagonists. "He was old," he said, and his opinions were known; "while his strength lasted he had maintained them to the best of his power; that strength was now gone, and he could only commit the cause to one Whose judgments would speedily overtake the transgressors against His Church." At this precise moment an unusual sound was heard, and, before it could be accounted for, the floor of the room in which the council sat gave way, and in its fall numbers perished; S. Dunstan clung to a beam, and so escaped.^b When the alarm and confusion caused by this mischance were over, those who were saved besides himself seemed to share one feeling; that the will of God was shewn in the accident, and in its occurrence at that particular moment; and, in consequence, the demands of the secular clergy were negatived. This may be called superstition, but it betrays a consciousness of where the truth lay, and it had for a time the effect of a Divine interposition, by saving the Church.

I would here repeat again that this was not simply a dispute about marriage and celibacy among the clergy, it was a question of obedience to the discipline of the Church, of whether the married clergy should be allowed the possession of lands willed by their former owners to monastic foundations as such; its settlement in their favour would involve a complete revolution in the existing laws of the Church; what had been only tolerated would become established; and a change

^b William of Malmesbury.

which, if expedient, demanded the greatest caution and the most careful deliberation, would have been yielded to popular tumult. This is the true surface of the argument, when the rubbish that has been heaped upon it by the low irreligious ideas of modern historians has been cleared away. All, however, have not been equally narrow-minded ; a few who could not appreciate the saint or follow him in his ascetic virtues, have nevertheless discovered in Dunstan the high-minded and enlightened statesman, the master spirit of the age he lived in : his religious zeal they attribute to madness, a "madness," one says, "*consistent with perfect good sense on all points save that which became the subject of his delusions, nor did it in the slightest degree diminish his singular and almost unexampled acuteness, activity and industry.*" Another admits that he was a "lover of justice and peace ;" a third that "he who, in a time of universal dissolution, was able so powerfully to awaken and bind the more seriously disposed, understood and effected the best that a knowledge of his time and circumstances placed within his power." Such admissions may well neutralise the counter-statements with which they are blended.

Outwardly this last council put an end to the struggle between the seculars and regulars, but it was only the principle that was gained ; and although in this light S. Dunstan's must be considered a great victory, the practice of the Church was not reformed, nor were the manners of the secular clergy amended.

But the public mind was shortly to be occupied by a tragedy, in which so much that was sorrowful was intermingled that its sympathies might well be engrossed,

to the exclusion of other important matters. Little has been said of the young king; I can hardly guess at the actual amount of regard in which he was held, and am inclined to suppose that hitherto the strength of his character had not been tested, so that he held but the place of a minor in the public estimation. But there is a kind of interest which always attaches to the young and endears them to us, there is something in their very weakness that demands our protection; and so when they are unfairly dealt with, the degree of commiseration their sufferings excite is generally proportioned to the amount of injury sustained. Nor was Edward unpromising, far from it; he seems to have been regular in his devotions, and considerate to those whose position demanded his respect, two very important steps towards a higher excellence. He met his death in the exercise of the last of these virtues. Corfe Castle, in the island of Purbeck, Dorsetshire, was a royal residence, and now contained within its walls the individual whose restless ambition had so nearly caused a revolution in the earlier part of the reign, Elfrida, the tyrannical oppressor of Edward's first years; but towards whom he seems to have borne no resentment, while he retained the warmest affection for his young half-brother, prince Ethelred. Elfrida remained apparently passive after the voice of the country had determined against the right of her son to the throne, but her mind still rankled under the disappointment of her designs. It was an affectionate impulse in Edward, when hunting in the domains of Purbeck, to leave his party, to pay his step-mother and the young prince a visit, but it was an imprudent one, and his life was the forfeit of his rashness.

Elfrida greeted his arrival with a show of cordiality, which effectually concealed her treachery. Under the pretence of providing for his entertainment, she withdrew for awhile from his presence, to lay the diabolical plan which was determined to be successful; and when, in her return, her son-in-law pledged her health with much effusiveness, in a cup of wine, a creature she had engaged in her interests took that opportunity of stabbing him in the back. The fatal dagger did its work, and although the young king, upon feeling its thrust, turned his horse and fled rapidly in the direction in which his followers were to be found, his exertions to reach them were unavailing: a film came over his eyes, and fainting away from loss of blood, he fell, and was dragged by his horse for a considerable distance. The animal stopped at last, opposite the house of a poor blind woman, who lived on the borders of the forest, but life was extinct. Perhaps it was well for Edward that it was so, for Elfrida's people, and not his own friends, were the first to track his flight. Guided by the blood, they succeeded in obtaining his senseless body, which they threw into a deep well, to prevent the discovery of the crime; and afterwards they removed it, for greater security, to Wareham, where it was privately buried, in an unconsecrated and lonely spot. It is to the circumstances connected with this interment that the title of "S. Edward the Martyr" is to be attributed. It was believed that a bright light played over the place, and that, in consequence of this remarkable appearance, the friends of the murdered king were led to institute a search, which resulted in the recovery of the royal remains. Such an incident causing great excitement in

the neighbourhood, an impression of the young prince's sanctity took possession of the minds of the people, and they thronged from all quarters to see the body ; and some who were diseased, and touched it, were cured ; and whether this happened through the reality of what they believed, or the strength of their faith, it matters very little. It is just one of the cases of miraculous cures upon which it is impossible to pronounce, from the scanty evidences we possess ; but we may admire the Divine purpose that crime should be brought to light and blood avenged, and its perfect fulfilment in the present instance. Elfrida's rank shielded her from the immediate retribution due to her sin, but not from the pangs of a guilty conscience. We first hear of her astonishment and agitated feelings at the reputed miracles that attended the discovery of the body of her victim, and then, that to ascertain the truth of the report, she attempted to go to the place herself, but her horse became restive, and would not be prevailed upon to carry her.^p This adding to her nervous terror, her life, from that period, was one of continued agony.^q She always imagined herself pursued by evil spirits, and, to keep them off, she took to covering herself with crosses ; seeking, in the sign of the Spotless One, protection from the plague-spot of her own guilt. Other tales remain of holy houses which she established and endowed, as

^p "For the same creature which she had heretofore constantly ridden, and which was used to outstrip the very winds in speed, now, by command of God, stood motionless. The attendants, both with whips and clamours, urged him forward, that he might carry his noble mistress with his usual readiness ; but their labour was in vain. They changed the horse ; and the same circumstance recurred." William of Malmesbury. Sharpe's trans.

^q "Elfrida . . . became extremely penitent ; so that at Werewell, (a nunnery which she founded, on the spot where her first husband was killed by king Edgar,) for many years, she clothed her pampered body in haircloth, slept at night upon the ground without a pillow, and mortified her flesh with every kind of penance." Ibid.

a penitential offering, and in one of which she found at last a resting-place for her body ; but whether her soul rests we dare not enquire.

LECTURE XXIII.

A.D. 979—1002.

THE REIGN OF ETHELRED.

WHAT could be expected from the son of Elfrida? Some people think it hard to judge a child by the parent; but, as it not unseldom happens that the sins of the parent descend to the child, so also we have the fullest grounds for believing that great and perfect characters have, in most instances, owed their first bias towards right, and the more valuable of their habits, whether of thinking or acting, to an affectionate parent's early training. This has been remarkably the case where the child was dedicated in infancy, such dedications seeming to stamp the future saint almost from the cradle; but where this highest and holiest idea of education has been a thing unknown, (and how few, even in our day, can realise it,) the impressions of the children of virtuous parents have early been formed in favour of virtue; they have seen its beauty and truth, and, when they have fallen, it has been with that vision of beauty undimmed in their soul. And how can we doubt the power of first training, who know how easily habits are formed at any time of life, and how difficult it is to break through them; or who have been much with children, whose whole life is, ordinarily, but one

great act of imitation ? Fearful indeed are the responsibilities of parents, and of any who are the companions of the young ; they go but too often recklessly onwards in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure, and their self-seeking is a “ stumbling-block and rock of offence ” to Christ’s “ little ones,” and they “ lay it not to heart,” neither do “ they regard it.”

Elfrida gained a crown for herself by the murder of her husband, one for her son by the murder of his brother, and the child of such a marriage, the heir by such a succession, was doomed to be unblest from the hour of his coronation ; nay, some say from his infancy. It was in bitterness of spirit that S. Dunstan placed the crown upon his head ; the bitterness, not of anger, but of grief and dismay. “ Wretched and miserable boy,” he exclaimed, as his soul struggled to give birth to the prophetic future, “ who hast made thy way to the throne over the senseless body of thy murdered brother, know that that blood shall not be washed away but by the best heart’s blood of hundreds of thy subjects ; fiercely shall evil pursue thy destiny, and, since England has been a nation, have no such sorrows overtaken her as shall come upon her through thy misgovernment.”^a This awful denunciation on the child was even more than verified in Ethelred’s unhappy reign. He might himself be compared rather to a blight than to a scion of royalty ; puny, cowardly, effeminate, mean, his only sign of amiability, the tears which he shed over his brother, is nullified by what we hear of his weak terror, when his mother chastised him for this

^a William of Malmesbury. Ethelred was crowned at Kingston, A.D. 979. Saxon Chronicle.

burst of natural affection. She beat him on that occasion so severely, with a wax candle, that he never could bear a wax light to be brought into his presence afterwards.^b His title, "the Unready," illustrates his disposition. Always feeble in his arrangements, his enemies generally found him unprepared, and they took every advantage of his weakness ; and, as during several preceding years, the increased confusion in public affairs, and the party spirit among the clergy, had unsettled the minds of the people, the country was more than usually ripe for disaster. The earls, at this time, were a formidable class ; they were too powerful for the well-being of the state. With their large landed possessions, bands of armed retainers, and strong-holds, it was no easy matter to keep them in check ; when rebellious, most of the people in their county sided with them, either through fear or favour. Another set of men, equally dangerous to the public weal, were the naturalized Danes, and especially the Danish soldiers. By profession these were mercenaries, in habits sensualists, half-heathens in religion, while the long quiet which England had enjoyed had given them time to become luxurious in their way of living, and elaborate in their personal decorations. They combed and adorned their long hair with the most exact attention,^c went regularly once a week into the bath, and practised other arts to attract admiration ; and many noble Saxon

^b William of Malmesbury. Rapin.

^c Sigurd, the son of Bui "the Thick," a Dane of this period, is described thus :—"a fine young man, in the flower of his age, with long fair hair, as fine as silk, flowing in ringlets over his shoulders." "I fear not death," he said, "but I must pray thee not to let my hair be touched by a slave or stained with my blood." See Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 146. One custom was to entwine gold wires amongst these ringlets, by way of enhancing their beauty.

families had their peace broken by the seductions of these Danish coxcombs, who allured away their daughters from their quiet homes to follow their erratic fortunes.^d

A period of rather less than two years elapsed from the coronation of Ethelred, in 979, before these disorders took any distinct form of evil, but this time was of sufficient length to enable the disaffected to judge what the future government was likely to prove. It is probable that the naturalized Danes still kept up some communication with their countrymen; at any rate, they were soon aware of the state of England, and, before the end of the year 981, three different descents had been made on the eastern coast. These invasions were not exclusively Danish, one being by a body of either Norwegians or Normans, and I am inclined to think the latter;^e for they are spoken of as of Danish extraction, and called Northmen, and, except, in this manner, it would be difficult to give a reason for Ethelred's subsequent expedition against the Normans, and the strong resentment they had excited in his breast. The first descent of the Danes was at Southampton, in seven ships, then a party landed at the Isle of Thanet, where they did great damage in plundering the inhabitants, and the "Northmen" overran the neighbourhood of Chester. From this period for ten successive years the country was beset by these foreigners, and a

^d A common word for lazy fellow in some parts of England is "*lurdane*," supposed to be a corruption of *lord-dane*, the title given to the Danes on account of their arrogant ways. Rapin.

^e "If the south-west position of the coast thus infested causes us to hesitate in supposing its assailants to be warriors from the Danish isles. . . . a suspicion against the Danes inhabiting the opposite coast of Normandy seems by no means void of foundation," &c. &c. Lappenburg, vol. ii. p. 153.

prey also to internal tumults ; it might be said that trouble followed trouble as wave upon wave.

In 982, Padstow, or Petrocstow, in Cornwall, a bishop's see, was burned by the Danes, and the see was translated to S. Germans ; then a conflagration terrified the miserable inhabitants of London, by which that city was mostly destroyed ; a mortality in the provinces succeeded the conflagration, making desolate wherever its effects extended. From Padstow the Danes went to Portland, and ravaged that island ; and, about the same time, a mutiny broke out in Wales, which country afterwards suffered in its turn from a descent of people from the Hebrides, under Harold, the king of those islands. In 983, Elfere, the Church's enemy, died in great agony, but as he had ever been a stout champion against the Danes, his loss seemed, in such a crisis, an aggravation of the public woes ; and the following year a greater calamity ensued, for the good bishop Ethelwold was removed to another life. In the midst of these distresses S. Dunstan still survived, but rather in name than in deed ; nor, had he exerted himself, would his efforts have availed, for he met with no support from king Ethelred, who respected neither Church nor clergy. He gave a proof of this in 984, when he marched an army against Rochester, ordering the troops to lay waste the Cathedral lands, because its bishop had refused, in some way, to comply with his wishes. This outrage roused the spirit of S. Dunstan, who, upon being made acquainted with the irreverence of the king, earnestly remonstrated against it ; and, afterwards, conjecturing that it might perhaps arise from want of money, sent Ethelred one hundred

pounds, as an inducement to withdraw his troops ; when the king, who had refused to yield to the dictates of religion, accepted the bribe, to the sorrow and disgust of the archbishop, who again broke out into a solemn prediction of the punishment that would follow such unprincipled conduct, and of the evils impending on the nation from the sword of the Danes ; “ which calamities,” he added, “ I shall not live to see.” His prediction proved true, for not long afterwards he exchanged a state beset with cares and disappointments for one for which he had long waited. To the world he had been long since dead, for nine years his chair had been vacant in the public councils, and his persuasive voice silenced ; he had been laid aside, perhaps forgotten, and it would be easy to mention his death as a mere historical fact, and pass on to something else ; but to this I cannot bring myself, feeling, as I do, that his greatness demands yet another tribute of praise, and that what has been said of his character is imperfect without such a summing up as shall present it before you in its integrity. Let us then dwell upon it for a few brief minutes, as shewn in his actual teaching, to read a letter which he addressed to bishop Wulfsine.¹

“ To his faithful friend the bishop Wulfsine, archbishop Dunstan wisheth health, with salvation and peace everlasting in the Lord God.

“ Let us return thanks to God, Who has pre-ordained

¹ Mabillon *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. vii. sec. v. p. 239. Lingard has noticed that much of it is taken from a letter of Alcuin to Eadbald, archbishop of York, which is the 50th in the last edition of his works, vol. i. p. 63. At the end of it he desires Eadbald to have it neatly written out, and to keep it by him. It was a usual custom through the middle ages for men, even of considerable learning and ability, to patch their writings with fragments from

us, unworthy as we are, and the last among His servants, to be governors of His Church in these dangerous and most distressing times ; and let us join in one common prayer to the mercy of Almighty God, that He may aid us in the performance of every good work.

“ Now, then, dearly beloved brother, do manfully, and boldly fulfil the work of the Lord which thou hast in hand, for our own souls' benefit, and the salvation of many souls. Let not thy tongue be slack to preach, nor thy hand to work, nor thy foot to visit thy flock. Give alms abundantly, and raise up everywhere the holy Church of God. Be thou a pattern of salvation to all men, thyself an example of most holy life, thyself a comfort to the afflicted, thyself a counsellor to the doubtful. In thee be the vigour of discipline, in thee the confidence of truth, in thee the hope of all virtue. Be not thou elated with the pomp of the world, nor unstrung by indulgence in meats, nor softened by the vanity of dress ; be not deceived by the tongue of flattery, nor disturbed by the clamours of slanderers ; suffer not adversity to depress, nor prosperity to elevate thee. Be not a ‘ reed shaken with the wind,’ nor a flower drooping under the storm, nor a falling wall, nor a ‘ house built upon the sand ;’ but rather a temple of God, standing on the solid rock, with the Spirit, the Paraclete Himself, for its inhabitant. Shew thyself to good men meek and humble, but to the proud hard and inflexible. ‘ Become all things to all men, that thou mayest gain all.’ Hold out in thy hands both honey and wormwood, let each one eat of them that which he chooseth ; honey let him eat who is willing to feed on

holy teaching ; wormwood let him drink who stands in need of correction, yet so that he may still hope for the honey of pardon, if he first have the rose of penitent confession.

“ ‘ Let all your good things be done in order.’ Let a portion of the day be selected for study, hours be appointed for prayer, and a convenient time be set aside for the celebration of mass. ‘ He who regardeth the day regardeth it to the Lord.’ Let cheerfulness at your table be tempered with gravity. On fast days, take care that your refreshment be chastened. Then ‘ wash your face’ with tears of repentance for sin, and ‘ anoint your head with the oil’ of merciful deeds. Let whatsoever thou doest be acceptable to the Lord God, Who has chosen thee a priest to Himself.

“ Remind the ealdorman, and those in power, of their duties : to be lenient and merciful in their judgments ; to love cleanness of heart and body—‘ blessed are the clean in heart for they shall see God ;’ to protect the Church of Christ, that the Lord of the Church may help and protect them ; to have pity on widows and orphans, that God may have pity on them ; to be meek and kind to all men, gathering in one, and not dispersing, the people of God, and keeping peace among themselves :—‘ Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God.’

“ For thyself, beloved brother, have the love and fear of God constantly before thine eyes ; order also the Pastoral of our blessed father, Gregory, in which is faithfully described the life of both bishops and people, to be frequently read in thy presence ; and often remember us in thy holy prayers, that the mercy

of God may defend, rule, and preserve us, as I believe it is your desire, that we may pass through life in the love and good pleasure of God. Think not these admonitions a work of supererogation or pride, but receive them with feelings of love, for 'the city is strong when brother stands by brother.'

"May God Almighty grant to you everlasting salvation."

Another anecdote of S. Dunstan, and I have done. There was in king Edgar's time a great and powerful earl, who took a wife unlawfully, for she was too nearly related to him. S. Dunstan heard of it, and remonstrated with him more than once, quietly and kindly, requiring him to dissolve the marriage, but in vain. The nobleman, depending on his position and influence, laughed the prelate to scorn; upon which S. Dunstan put him under the lesser excommunication. Excommunication was much more than a censure: an excommunicate person could not enter the Church, was shunned by his friends, and degraded from acting in public capacities.* He was to the Church, as an outlaw to the state, but this similitude conveys but an imperfect idea of the truth, for in these days, alas, notorious and open sinners are received and associated with by many, and outlaws often more pitied than blamed. But this could not be formerly, for one who kept company with an excommunicate person was liable to ecclesiastical censure himself, and dared not run the risk. Therefore this Anglo-Saxon noble found himself in a most uncomfortable situation; but, as he was determined to persist in his sin, he went for relief, not to S. Dunstan,

* People would not touch what he had touched, or eat after him.

but to the king. I have said he was a man of influence, and the result of his application was a command to S. Dunstan, from king Edgar, to remove the censure. S. Dunstan was not to be deterred from his duty by the fear of losing the king's favour; and having seen the earl, and finding him still impenitent, he put him under the greater or full excommunication. There remained one more method for compelling the archbishop, at least, so thought the Saxon earl; he might disobey the king, he would not dare to disobey the pope. And, determined to gain his cause, he went to the expense of despatching agents to Rome, with handsome presents to persons there, who were induced by these to misrepresent the case, by which they gained from his holiness a favourable hearing. S. Dunstan must have been surprised and most painfully perplexed at receiving from his spiritual father a command to restore the offending nobleman to full communion; and so must the earl have been surprised to find that his toil and money had been thrown away, and to be told by S. Dunstan that he would "obey the pope when he saw him sorry for his crime—not till then! God forbid," said he, "that I should break the laws our Saviour left for the government of His Church for any mortal man, or even for the preservation of my life." S. Dunstan's conscientious firmness was rewarded; the astonished noble sought his forgiveness at a public synod, by falling humbly at his feet,^h having previously made true reparation, by separating himself from the partner of his

^h "And S. Dunstan happening to preside at a synod at this time, the count came barefoot thither, without any appearance of equipage or quality, and cast himself with tears at the archbishop's feet. . . . To preserve the *Church* discipline from suffering, and bring the penitent to a thorough

guilt; and now he was no longer denied the blessing he had learned to prize: S. Dunstan raised, comforted, and pardoned him.

This holy man was seized with his last illness in the midst of the sacred celebrations of the Ascension-day. Feeling himself death-struck, he took an affectionate leave of his flock, turning to address them at three different intervals in the service, for he knew that it was for the last time. They answered him by their tears. Then, having pointed out the spot where he desired his body should rest, he seated himself once more at the banquet which followed, in the midst of his guests and clergy. His time afterwards, until the Saturday morning, was given to preparation for his solemn change, on which day he fell asleep in Jesus, in the year of grace 988, May 19th.¹

In briefly reviewing his character, it may be as well to remark, that it has suffered as much through the ignorance and prejudice of some writers, as through the malice of others. The battle he had to fight with the secular clergy was a severe one, and can only be justified on two grounds: that the marriage of the clergy was contrary to the law of the English Church at that time, and that their possession of monastic benefices was illegal, as being opposed to the law of the founders. I think I have shewn this to have been the case, but if it has not been made sufficiently clear, a very little reading will prove it. But even all that has been told of S. Dunstan may not convince some that his conduct

compunction, he (S. Dunstan) concealed his tenderness, and kept him in suspense for an hour; then he melted into tears himself, and gave him absolution at the instance of the synod. This was apostolic impartiality, and right primitive conduct." Collier's Eccles. Hist. p. 464, vol. i.

¹ In the 64th year of his age. Collier.

was not too unbending, and rather that of the severe arbiter and judge than of the father of his people. It will also be thought that by favouring the introduction of so many foreign monks to situations of trust in England, he not only increased the bad feeling of the seculars, but gave undue pre-eminence to the monastic order, and depreciated the parochial clergy. In answer to this I can only say that S. Dunstan may have made some mistakes, for he lived in difficult times, but it is rather the part of fair and sound reasoning to suppose that, under the then existing law, he acted as wisely in ecclesiastical as he is known to have done in political matters ; for here all allow that his judgment was good. *We* can hardly realize his difficulties, but we can understand how the example of a body of men living in habits of strict holiness and self-denial would work in a neighbourhood where drinking and swearing, sensuality and unchastity, were the common and unshamed practice of the inhabitants, to a degree which is now unheard of ; and this will explain to us, if we only reflect calmly, why the reformers of those days, (and S. Dunstan was nothing more,) were so zealous to plant religious houses in and out through these moral wildernesses.^k

^k The following is the statement of a writer not prejudiced in his favour : —“ The Danes were spread all over England, and were supposed to be still attached to their pagan deities. The misery which they had inflicted in former reigns had not only impoverished the English, but corrupted their morals. The clergy were remiss in their duties, and very ignorant ; and, of all their number, Dunstan only, with Ethelwold and a very few others, meditated individual as well as national improvement. The means by which they thought to effect this improvement seem to have been very well chosen, namely, by the preaching and good example of the numerous body of clergy ; with whom, however, it was necessary, that reform should begin. . . . The plan of life adopted by Dunstan and Ethelwold, disregarded, upon principle, all sensual enjoyment—a virtue generally striking and intelligible, and sure of respect . . . but they soon found that the generation was, in most cases, beyond the reach of persuasion.” Then comes a description of the state of the clergy, which has been quoted elsewhere, and then is

If, again, the rule by which he compelled all to live a single life seems incompatible with our ideas of what is best for the clergy, and we are inclined to go to Scripture and antiquity to prove that it should not be compulsory, let us not forget that it was not S. Dunstan who made the celibacy of the clergy the law of the Church, he only obeyed a law which he found already established; and that the belief that those who are destitute of earthly ties are able to devote themselves, with greater intensity of purpose, to the service of the Heavenly King, is, at any rate, a most beautiful principle, and receives a warrant from the teaching of S. Paul himself. Let us not deny this, while we also learn from S. Paul not to depreciate holy matrimony, or to impose as a rule on all what is best only for a limited portion of the clergy.

S. Dunstan was succeeded in the archiepiscopal see by Ethelgar, who lived but one year and three months afterwards, and then by Siricius.

Siricius is notorious only for giving the king advice, the evil effects of which increased the misery under which England was suffering: his counsel was to buy off the Danes, and thus to make it their interest to desist from their incursions.

A fresh body having landed at Ipswich, Brithnoth, earl of East Anglia, a noble and worthy man, much and deservedly beloved, assembled an army to subdue them: he met the fate of the brave, and his army was

added the following testimony:—"Under such circumstances, our reformers saw that they must begin with educating children from the cradle, if they would have a decent order of priests; a total seclusion from ill example was also necessary, and perfect obedience. *Hence the rise and encouragement amongst us of monastic education, and its promised blessed effects.*" Dissection of the Saxon Chronicle, pp. 43—45.

dispersed. An anecdote which remains of his benevolence tells how he refused, during this distress, the honour of dining with the abbot of Ely, saying, "I cannot fight without my companions, so I must not dine without them."¹ His death was looked upon as a great misfortune, and it was in the perplexity which the news of it occasioned that it was weakly decided to offer the Danes £10,000 to quit England altogether, an offer which, as might have been foreseen, only stimulated the cupidity which it was meant to satisfy. Here we have the origin of the tax called Danegeld, afterwards regularly levied in the proportion of twelve pence on every hide of land, from which the idea of a land tax took its rise.^m About this time died Oswald, archbishop of York, and earl Ethelwin, who had so recently taken the side of the Church in Mercia.ⁿ It was a luckless moment for the country : there does not seem to have been one master mind left among those in power, or any attempt made at combined measures ; all that was done was done in a confused and desultory way. Ethelred's movements were always slow, and his inefficient plans generally committed to the management, or rather mismanagement, of men who carried no weight with them. Thus Elfric, son of Elfere, who had, for some cause, incurred the penalty of banishment, and returned from it full of resentment for the indignity, was actually intrusted with the command of the royal squadron ; and, on another occasion, three naturalized Danes were made leaders of the force against

¹ Camden's Remains, p. 311. A.D. 991.

^m "For what was first raised for the Danes out of fear and supposed necessity, is now levied by the crown out of custom." Collier, quoting Henry of Huntingdon, vol. i. p. 477. There were several acres in each hide.

ⁿ A.D. 992.

their own countrymen! Elfric, as might have been expected of him, treacherously betrayed the movements of the fleet to the enemy, and the Danish generals, Frena, Godwin, and Frithgist, ran away, leaving their army to help itself. The first of these catastrophes took place at London, the second near the mouth of the Humber. It never seemed to occur to Ethelred to head the army himself, as his ancestors had so bravely done before him; or, if it did, he paid no attention to the generous impulse: yet he could punish cruelly when in the mind; and when he heard of Elfric's treachery, he revenged it on his innocent child, whose eyes he caused to be taken out; and, strange as it may appear, he almost immediately afterwards took back the father to favour, and gave him situations of trust, which was a climax of weakness. As another instance of his resentful feelings, we have the expedition which he fitted out against duke Richard's territories; the soldiers had orders, on landing in Normandy, *to burn and slay everything*; an exception, however, was made of the Mount S. Michael. His commands being scrupulously obeyed, the consequences were, that only one from his army survived to bring home intelligence of the fate of the others! This last may be taken as a specimen of his prudence; and the thoughtless folly of such a way of acting, to say nothing worse of it, might have plunged him, at a most inconvenient moment, into a war with France, but that pope John XV. mediated between him and duke Richard, and a treaty of peace was concluded; but how much better it would have been for Ethelred to attend to his defences at home, than to make such experiments! In the year

994,^o a fleet of ninety-four ships appeared in the Thames, commanded by two celebrated Norman warriors, Olave and Sweyn.

Sweyn, a Danish prince, had once been refused hospitality by Ethelred, or at least he alleged this as an excuse for his invasion ; Olave was a Norwegian king, who went out in his youth on a piratical excursion,^p and, landing in the Scilly islands, fell in with a hermit who baptized him, but he returned to his own country very ignorant, and, save in name, a heathen. These two kings had now joined their forces with the intention of taking full advantage of Ethelred's weakness, and making themselves masters of England. But in their design upon London they were unsuccessful, the citizens defending it bravely, and at last obtaining the victory. This defeat did not prevent their securing all the lands on the banks of the river Thames, and overrunning Essex, Surrey, and Hampshire ;^q hearing of which Ethelred again resorted to the expedient of giving money to rid himself of them. A sum of sixteen thousand pounds was now offered and accepted, and

^o "On the first day of the feast, king Svend, (Sweyn) before he placed himself in the high seat of his ancestors, filled a horn, and drank to his father's memory, making, at the same time, according to custom, a solemn vow, that, before three winters had passed, he would go with a large army to England, and either kill king Ethelred, or drive him out of the country." Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 143. This is said to have taken place in the year 994, which is the date given in the Saxon Chronicle for Sweyn's arrival in England.

^p "The Danes were perhaps more numerous on sea than on land. As soon as a prince had attained his eighteenth or twentieth year, he commonly requested of his father a small fleet completely fitted out, in order to achieve, with his followers, some adventure that might be productive of glory and spoil. . . . That nation became the first object of their resentment from whom they had received any injury, &c." Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 178.

^q "But though they could effect nothing upon the city, yet the country was at their mercy, and therefore, leaving their ships, they landed and wasted with fire and sword all Kent, Essex, Sursex, Surrey and Hampshire." Sir John Prise's History of Wales, p. 65.

Sweyn departed to Denmark only to make fresh plots against the peace of England, but Olave remained for some months as guest to Ethelred ; for his visit to a Christian country revived the slumbering life which he had received at baptism, and the trained and enthusiastic warrior of the north yielded a willing submission to the dominion of the " Prince of Peace."

At his confirmation by bishop Elphege, Ethelred adopted him as his spiritual son, and Olave faithfully kept the promises he then made. When he went back to Norway it was to fight the battles of the Crucified, to raze to the ground heathen temples, break in pieces the idols within them, and exhort all within his territory to become Christians : nor would he ever again take up arms against England.*

It is so wearisome to follow each incursion of Danes in detail, possessing as they all do the same features, that I should be strongly tempted to take example by

* According to some there was much more zeal than moderation in his subsequent career, and he is said to have perpetrated cruelties on those who refused to become converts. I cannot clear this point, but I hope that it is an exaggerated, if not a false, statement. One anecdote may be mentioned in proof ; perhaps some one else may find additional evidence in his favour. It is as follows :—" Olave then, in the third year of his reign, had already converted his courtiers, and at a Thing (council or court), held shortly after Kjartan's arrival, managed to persuade most of the inhabitants of the Drontheim district to receive the rite of baptism ; giving the Icelanders, at the same time, plainly to understand, that they should not set sail ere the same rite had been administered to them ' I,' said Kjartan, ' am of opinion that instead of sitting here to be taken like sheep in a fold, and compelled, as these poor Norwegians have been, to kneel to a kirtled monk, we should do better to fall on king Olave, and burn him in his palace.' The following day, Olave, who had been duly informed of their proceedings by his spies, summoned the Icelanders to his presence, and told them that he was fully determined to make them Christians before they left Drontheim, adding that he was well aware that one of them had proposed to burn him to death in his palace. Kjartan unhesitatingly avowed that it was he who made the proposal. ' Well, this time I will not punish thee,' said the king, and as ye are averse to the doctrines of Christianity, ye may depart in peace, *for the God we worship does not wish that any one should be brought to Him by compulsion.*" Mallet's North. Ant. p. 350. Olave, according to the same writer, died in his own house, A.D. 1006 ; others say he was murdered. He is to be distinguished from the S. Olave who reigned over Norway at a later period.

the old historian, William of Malmesbury, and amuse myself and you by a number of anecdotes quite unconnected with the subject in hand, if it would help us forward. But I am afraid we should soon find ourselves in his hapless case, and have to return to where we left off. The west of England appears to have suffered most at this time, Devon and Cornwall more particularly ; and in one of these outbreaks Tavistock abbey^{*} was burned down : Dorsetshire and Hampshire were next overrun. The year following Rochester was ravaged. During all this time the royal army was under preparation, but what with meetings of thanes to discuss that which ought to be done, and differences of opinion, and points of etiquette connected with the questions how, and when, and by whom it was to be done, no army marched until its presence would have been too late ; and then it was employed by Ethelred to punish the disaffected among his own subjects, and those who had refused to pay the Danegeld ; so entirely was everything mismanaged that he took in hand. Another expedition of the enemy, occurring soon after the last mentioned, was joined and promoted by earl Pallig, a Saxon nobleman ; but who had married Gunhilda, Sweyn's sister, and turned traitor according to the approved fashion of the day. Instances of this kind became now so common that a faithful subject was rather the exception than the rule. Exeter, a strongly fortified city, remained firm in the royal cause, but Teignmouth was burned, and a great slaughter of the inhabitants of that part of the country took place at Pinhoe, where they suffered an entire defeat at

^{*} Founded a short time before by earl Ordgar.

the hand of the Danish tyrants. These events carrying us on two or three years more, we come to another offer of twenty-four thousand pounds to the enemy, which sum bought a short and deceitful peace. Sixteen counties were now more or less wasted and destroyed, the poor inhabitants driven hither and thither, maltreated, slain, and dispersed.

Ethelred, who had been for a short time a widower, took advantage of this temporary lull to strengthen himself by a political marriage. Richard II. had succeeded his father, Richard I. as duke of Normandy, in 996, and this prince and Ethelred were on terms, so that when the English monarch pretended to the hand of his beautiful sister Emma, called the "Pearl of Normandy," he made no opposition, but gave his full sanction to the alliance. The celebration was in A.D. 1002, and it seems to have given umbrage to both Saxons and Danes, the former being full of prejudices against her foreign blood, the latter unwilling to see the crown influence strengthened from Normandy, just as they had made sure of overthrowing it altogether. To the first of these objections there is little to be said, for Emma was virtuous as well as beautiful, and, as we should think, a far better queen than Ethelred deserved; but one of the forms which the prejudice against her took is so amusing, that I cannot help mentioning it. The Saxons, for want, I suppose, of another objection, found fault with her name, preferring the odd sounding Elfgiva of their own dialect to the softer appellation of Emma. The queen wisely gave way on this point, and assumed the Saxon title.

But the discontents of the Danish part of the popu-

lation ripened into a deeper feeling, and a plot against the life of the king and his nobles was agitated, and, as I believe, darkly hinted to Ethelred by some private friend. We may hope that it was so, for, if no excuse, it is at least a palliation, of an act of cold-blooded cruelty which has few parallels in the history of any country. The narrative will fill you with horror. Upon the 19th of November, the day of S. Britius,[†] which fell that year on a Sunday, when another weary week had closed, a day upon which even Danes went unarmed, allowing themselves a short interval of rest, if not to offer prayers to their Maker, yet liking to copy the Saxons in keeping festival, the signal was given for a general massacre of these people. On Sundays and festivals they were very particular about their appearance, going into the bath, and spending a considerable time in combing and smoothing their long hair; this, their unarmed and defenceless condition, was Ethelred's cowardly reason for making choice of a holy season for a deed of blood. He had sent private letters everywhere to command the inhabitants to rise against their foreign guests as by one instinct, and so, secretly and surely, to dispatch them. It needed little to awaken the deadly animosity that had long existed between the natives and their invaders, and Ethelred's commands were obeyed. Still, when we remember how many Danish families had become altogether domesticated in England, and the connexions they had formed, and the sympathies that must have arisen in consequence of these ties, it is marvellous that such a heathenish act could have been perpetrated, or such a command kept


[†] S. Brice's day.

secret until the plot was ripe for execution ; that Ethelred did not in this, as in other things, outwit himself. His success must be taken in the light of a retribution on the Danes, permitted because of their atrocities ; for they had been now so many years in contact with the truth of Christianity, that, failing to embrace it, their responsibilities must have been as great as their vices were inexcusable. It is supposed that the order to slay only extended to Danes who had remained in England after Sweyn's departure, but this modified idea is hardly borne out by the event. It is also likely that the cruelties committed on helpless women and children arose more from the lawless state into which neighbourhoods were thrown in carrying out such a mandate, than from their being intentionally included in it. But so it was that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of wretched women, suffered with their husbands and sons ; and they were, in most cases, maltreated and mutilated after a manner which is too painful to describe. One, the noble and courageous Gunhilda, wife to that Pallig who had turned traitor, for his treason, and because she was Sweyn's sister, was forced first to be present at the murder of her own sons, and afterwards beheaded herself at the same place ; and this by the command of either Ethelred or the court favourite Edric, when others would have spared her, supposing her not included in the revolting order, because of her virtues, and because she had more than once acted as mediator between her people and the English, besides being a woman and a Christian. The fortitude with which Gunhilda met her death was a reproof to her enemies, as was also her dying declar-

ation, that her "blood flowed at the expense of all England, for God would not suffer it to go unrevenged."

Can you conceive that this massacre of the Danes was ordered by the king in the name of God and of His saints,—the holy name used to sanction an action the most unholy? Before Ethelred could so awfully pervert its holiness, his moral sense must have been obliterated; for the conscience may grow, by familiarity with vice, like a stream stagnating on foul matter, which, instead of transparently shewing its own depths, and clearly reflecting the Heavens, becomes so polluted as to be dark and hidden within, and no longer to bear, even on its surface, the image of things above.

But it is time to make a pause in the sad story of this reign, of which, indeed, the miseries still remain half untold, and are painful even to tell, but may not be told in vain if they stamp upon your minds a loathing of Ethelred's vices, especially of his indolence, irreverence, and cruelty. Perhaps its most obvious teaching, at the present moment is this, that we beware how we tamper with the beginnings of sin, lest by little and little it gain such power over us that we resemble beasts of prey rather than immortal beings, lest even the savage bear, or wild wolf of the forest, prove in its untamed ferocity not so much an object of hatred and disgust as ourselves.



LECTURE XXIV.

A.D. 1002—1016.

REIGN OF ETHELRED "THE UNREADY" CONTINUED.

AMONGST Ethelred's other irregularities are enumerated the slights he put on his queen; unworthy women estranged his affections from her, (if indeed he had any,) and the "Pearl of Normandy" was forgotten.*

Those on whom he conferred his favours were among the basest of men; he selected them probably for their convivial qualities, or, as the old English proverb has it, because "like will to like." Edric Streon seems to have been one of the worst, Brithric, this man's brother, no better, and queen Emma caused an unfortunate appointment in the person of Hugh, a Norman, who had come over in her train, and whom she thought so well of that he was made governor of Exeter.

Of course the news of the massacre of S. Brice's day renewed the vindictive feelings of the Danes across the water, and especially of Gunhilda's brother; nor did Sweyn wait long to revenge the murder of that princess. The following year brought him to the coast of Devonshire with all the forces he could muster. Exeter having so lately held out against the Danes, he essayed first to gain the city by stratagem, offering the above-named Hugh a large bribe to yield him possession;

* William of Malmesbury.

the base Norman took the bait and surrendered it. It was a fearful tale for the English that Sweyn had made that strong position his own, and preparations were set on foot, on a large scale, to rid the country of him. A numerous and well-appointed army marched for this purpose, and had any one but a vagabond been chosen for its leader, matters might have mended: but no, Ethelred could not do right, or he would not. The command was given to that Elfric whose evil passions have already been brought prominently before us, and who, still nourishing his private wrongs, had found no means of resenting them. Here, then, was the wished-for occasion. He led the army into Sweyn's presence, feigned himself violently sick, and deserted it. There was great consternation among the soldiers, which paved the way for disorder, and they fled! Thus Sweyn's insulting carriage was without a check, and he ravaged Devonshire until the necessity for reinforcing himself drove him back with his fleet to Denmark; he returned, however, the following spring to renew the war. In all this confusion one nobleman only behaved himself worthily, Ulfketyl, who, although of Danish extraction, saw the misery which his people inflicted in its true light, and, by his advice and exertions, very much assisted the East-Anglians, whose "witan" he assembled, to concert the best measures for the general safety. An action between his troops and the Danes had well-nigh destroyed the Danish force, but many a noble Saxon closed his eyes on that battle-field to open them no more; so that, if a victory, it was dearly bought.^b

^b "There were the chief among the East-Anglian people slain." *Saxon Chronicle*, year 1004.

Nor was this temporary success any alleviation to the national sorrows, for the means of life were so diminished in the country by the Danish army, that even these invaders now quitted it to avoid starvation ; and during the whole of the year 1005 famine reigned in all its horrors.

I would here mention incidentally that since Siricius's death, (and he was archbishop but a short time), the metropolitan dignity had been vested in Elfric, the celebrated Saxon author, about whose identity there have been so many disputes ; for in fact there were three Elfric's of this period, all of them ecclesiastics, all of them authors ; and, perplexed as we often are in getting at a true sense of the most common events of that day, it is no wonder if there is a difficulty in identifying individuals who are merely named in connexion with them. Archbishop Elfric was a remarkable man, and much respected ; he upheld the discipline of the Church with the same zeal that had distinguished S. Dunstan, waging the same war against the irregularities of the clergy.^c There is still extant a very celebrated homily of his, on the doctrine of the Eucharist, in which, (following S. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of S. John,) he strongly inculcates, as our Prayer book says, that "the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances," but that sacramentally, "through ghostly mystery," they are, after their hallowing, Christ's Body and Blood.^d

^c "He (Elfric) ruled his diocese with vigour and piety during a period of continual sufferings from the inroads of the Danes." *Biographia Literaria*, p. 484.

^d "Now some have often searched, and do yet often search, how bread that is gathered of corn, and through heat of fire baked, may be turned to Christ's Body ; or how wine, that is pressed out of many grapes, is turned, through our blessing, to the Lord's Blood. Now say we to such men that

He does not appear to have meddled with politics. He was succeeded in the see of Canterbury by Elphege II, A.D. 1006. Edric Streon became, about this time, the king's son-in-law, marrying Edith, a daughter by his first wife, and, on this account, was made duke of Mercia. He was in heart a traitor, "sold to the Danes" is the expression used to describe his perfidy; and yet he was entrusted with the command of the army, and Brithric, his brother, with that of the fleet!

A petty jealousy of a noble called Wulnoth,* whom Edric Streon and Brithric accused to king Ethelred, was almost the last of those second causes which led to the ruin of England; her sum of wretchedness was now well nigh completed. Wulnoth was probably powerful and popular; he is called in the Saxon Chronicle the "Child of the South Saxons," and the great earl Godwin, who will shortly make a considerable figure in our narrative, was his son. Now when Wulnoth heard of his accusation, and who had accused him, he at once despaired of getting any justice from the king, for he knew that Edric and Brithric were his creatures; and

some things be spoken of Christ symbolically, some by thing certain. True thing it is and certain that Christ was born of a maid, and suffered death voluntarily, and was buried, and on this day rose from death. He is called Bread symbolically, and a Lamb, and a Lion, and how else. He is called Bread because He is the life of us and of angels. He is said to be a Lamb for His innocence; a Lion for the strength with which He overcame the strong devil. But, nevertheless, after true nature, Christ is neither bread, nor lamb, nor lion. Why then is that holy housel called Christ's Body or His Blood, if it be not truly what it is called? Truly the bread and the wine which, by the mass of the priest, is hallowed, shew one thing without to human understanding, and another thing they call within to believing minds. Outwardly they are visible bread and wine, both in figure and taste; but they are truly, after their hallowing, Christ's Body and His Blood through ghostly mystery." Extract from Elfric's Homily.

* Wulnoth was a nephew of Edric Streon, being son to his brother Ethelmar. Shortly afterwards we hear of him, in the guise of a shepherd, entertaining Ulf, the great Danish earl, and assisting him in his flight from the English; so it seems probable that he returned from Denmark and lived in his own country secretly. It was on this occasion that the wife of Wulnoth committed her son Godwin to Ulf's care, who brought him up as his own child.

not choosing to bear his disgrace tamely, he turned pirate, and absconded with twenty of the finest ships belonging to the squadron, which were, for the time, under his command : Brithric chasing him with eighty more, and being overtaken by a tempest, these last were rendered unseaworthy, and many of them stranded. Such was the end of one of the finest fleets that England had ever seen, and of all the money and labour that had been expended to fit it out ! Shortly before this catastrophe not less than 36,000 pounds had been paid over to the Danes, so that the country was literally drained of resources. And, in addition, Edric Streon contrived to keep up a private understanding with the enemy ; giving them timely notice of every plan that was formed against them, and doubtless receiving a handsome reward for his treachery. Of what use was an army under such a leader ? And if Ulfketyl and a few brave men still struggled to turn the fortunes of the day, what could their isolated efforts accomplish beyond their own defeat ? Poor Ulfketyl soon experienced this sad truth. At length an event happened which was the crowning tragedy of that unhappy period, and it is described in the Saxon Chronicle in such simple touching language that I cannot do better than give it you in the same words.

A.D. 1011. “ And then in this year, between Lady-day and Michaelmas, they (the Danes) beseiged Canterbury, and got into it through treachery, because Elfmar betrayed it, whose life the archbishop Elphege had before saved. And there they took the archbishop Elphege, and Elfward the king’s steward, and the abbess Leofruna, and bishop Godwin ; and abbot Elf-

mar they let go away.^f And they took there within all the men in orders, and men and women; it is not to be told to any man how many there were . . . then went they to their ships, and led the archbishop with them . . . and they kept the archbishop with them until the time that they martyred him.”

A.D. 1012. “In this year came Edric the ealdorman, and all the chief witan, clergy, and laity, of the English people to London, before Easter.^g . . . and they were there so long as until all the tribute was paid, after Easter; that was eight and forty thousand pounds. Then on the Saturday was the army greatly excited against the bishop, because he would not promise them any money,^h but he forbade that anything should be given for him: they had also drunk deeply, for wine had been brought them from the south. Then took they the bishop, and led him to their hustings on the eve of Sunday, the octave of Easter, . . . and there they shamefully slaughtered him: they cast upon him bones and the horns of oxen,ⁱ and then one

^f Elfmar “the archdeacon.” Lloyd’s History of Wales.

^g This year the perfidious duke Edric Streon, and all the chief men of England, of each order, met at London, before Easter, and remained there until the tribute promised to the Danes, which was £48,000, was paid to them. Quoted from Sim. Dunelm. in Hist. Coll.

^h “When required to plunder his tenants in order to ransom himself.” William of Malmesbury.

ⁱ The following account of a Scandinavian banquet of that period may help to throw some light upon the circumstances of the archbishop’s death:— “In winter a fire was kindled on a hearth placed exactly in the centre of the hall, the smoke finding its way out through the apertures in the roof, which also served for windows. . . . On the southern side of the hall, opposite the fire hearth, was the ‘Ondregi,’ or high seat, a kind of throne raised on steps, and placed between two wooden columns . . . which were generally carved with Runic inscriptions . . . This was the seat occupied by the chieftain, his most distinguished guest being placed on another ‘Ondregi’ seat, probably not quite so high, and without columns, on the northern side of the hall, the fire blazing between them. The other guests and the retainers and dependents of the chieftain were ranged with their backs to the wall, on benches to the right and left of these ‘Ondregi’ seats, the other side of the tables placed before them being unoccupied. The flesh of the sacrificed animals, after being boiled in a large kettle over the

of them struck him with an axe-iron on the head, so that with the blow he sank down ; and his holy blood fell on the earth, and his holy soul he sent forth to God's kingdom."

S. Elphege knew that if the price set on his head was raised upon the Cathedral lands, it must be by the sufferings of his tenants ; this was the cause of his obstinate refusal to save his life by ransom ; it was a worthy and beautiful feeling.


"Do you remember," he said, "how the martyr S. Lawrence concealed the treasures of the Church, and chose rather to die than discover them? Would you have me betray my trust, impoverish the Church, and rob the poor? No! by the grace of God, I will not buy my life at such a sacrifice."

Not less worthy is his recorded employment during his long captivity, the conversion of his conquerors. One account says that he was preaching to the Danes at the very time that they murdered him ; another, that, having been beaten until he was half dead, he was thrown into a foul and offensive prison for a few days, and then brought out for execution before the leaders of the Danish force, when they began pelting him, as has been described above, and he knelt calmly down, and, following the pattern of his dying Lord, breathed his last in a prayer for his murderers, and for the beloved Church of his now desolate country. It is also

fire, was served up to these rude banqueters, *who frequently amused themselves by throwing the bones at one another*, the manner in which they were placed on the opposite sides of the hall being very convenient for indulging this elegant pastime. After they had finished eating their boiled horseflesh, they generally sat swilling their ale, out of capacious drinking horns," &c. See Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 284. Also a note in connexion, alluding to the martyrdom of S. Elphege, on the next page. See also Sir Francis Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Period.

said that, not being quite dead, notwithstanding the blow that had felled him to the earth, a Dane whom he had confirmed the day before, put an end to his sufferings out of compassion ; and a further attestation of his holiness exists in the fact that, after his death, these very heathen honoured him, and were earnest in wishing that his remains should be respected. He was martyred at Greenwich, and carried to S. Paul's, in London, to be interred, from whence his body was afterwards removed to Canterbury. So did Elphege sweetly pass from a world which was not worthy of him, but his memory remains with us ; we rescue it from the throng of political events, like a pearl from the turbulent ocean, shrine it with holy care, and wear it upon our hearts. In this general description of the calamities of that period it should be mentioned that the Danes followed a novel method of dealing with their prisoners in some instances, as at Canterbury, where they decimated them ; that is, they cast lots, and destroyed nine out of every ten in the whole number. In this way about forty-three thousand two hundred persons are supposed to have perished in Canterbury alone and its vicinity, including the burghers and the monks of S. Augustine's monastery,* of whom four only were left alive. And the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge suffered likewise in the ruin of the country ; nor were they fit for the reception of students until the year 1135.¹

England was now, in all respects, a conquered country, and Ethelred a nominal and not a real king.

Lambarde is quoted as the authority for this computation.
Andrews's History of Great Britain.

Another year and even that remnant of royalty departed from him.^m For Sweyn returned from Denmark, with the view rather of taking possession than of invading ; it was too late to oppose him with any chance of success, and Ethelred, a coward by nature, thought of nothing but retreat to the strongest position in his dominions. This was London, the conduct of whose inhabitants had been all through the war beyond praise. Again they rallied round their unworthy king, again they defended him so bravely that Sweyn was obliged to give up all hope of gaining the city and carry his arms elsewhere. Yet even London seemed unsafe at last, when day by day the news was brought in how town after town had submitted to the victorious Sweyn ; that almost every where he was acknowledged king. In the dilemma into which this unfortunate intelligence threw him, Ethelred's thoughts turned towards his brother-in-law in Normandy, and he resolved to sound that prince's feelings, by sending queen Emma and her two young sons to him for protection ;ⁿ determining to follow himself, if there seemed a chance of his being well received. Richard

^m " King Sweyn coming with a fresh fleet, he and his ferocious countrymen destroyed all before them. Pouring out of Lyndsey they set fire to every place of habitation, and tore out the bowels of the inhabitants. The religious also they put to death with a variety of tortures. They burned down Baston and Longtoft. They totally destroyed the convent of S. Pega, with all its contiguous manors ; namely, Glington, Norborough, Maxey, Etton, Badington and Barnack. Every family was cut off or led away in bonds. The abbot of S. Pega fled in the night with the whole brotherhood, and coming in boats to Croyland, they were saved. In like manner the abbey of Peterborough and the surrounding villages, and the manors of Eye, Thorp, Walton, Werrington, Paston, Dogsthorp, and Castor, were first stripped and then given to the flames. The abbot, with the greater part of his convent, went to Thorney ; the prior, with a few of the monks, escaped to the isle of Ely ; and ten of them, with the sub-prior, came to Croyland." Quoted from Ingulphus in the Diss. of the Sax. Chron.

ⁿ " His queen, accompanied by Elfsige, abbot of Peterborough, fled to her brother Richard, of whose disposition doubts might reasonably be entertained, in consequence of a treaty of friendship concluded between him and Sweyn, by which the Danes were allowed to sell in Normandy the plunder which they had collected in England." Lappenburg's Anglo-Saxon kings.

the second had much to forgive Ethelred, for he must have been sorely grieved at the treatment his sister had met with at his hands, but he was a Christian in the true sense, humble-minded and devout, and the hours he had spent in prayer had taught him not to resent injuries.^o Not only did he welcome his sister, and her children and suite, with cordiality, but he extended his hospitality to her wretched husband ; who followed her to Normandy before many months were over, leaving Sweyn sole master of England.

I will not call his short supremacy a reign, as some do ; it was rather an interregnum. Rapin says that his coronation is not recorded. No wonder ; for it would have been a difficult matter to get it legally performed, one of the most remarkable features of Ethelred's disastrous career being the faithful way in which the clergy held to him ; readily obeying his summons to the last hour of his regal authority, notwithstanding his vices ; this is another proof how strongly the belief in the Divine right of kings prevailed. And it may have been that Sweyn cared little about the formality of consecration ; to raise money to support his troops seemed to be his main object. In the manner of his death, which took place within six weeks of his accession to power, we have a striking instance of the force of an awakened conscience to terrify and destroy ; for I think I am not wrong in so interpreting the account of that event ; it is neither unreasonable nor superstitious to do so.

It happened that, in the course of his exactions upon

^o "At night, secretly escaping the observations of his servants, he was accustomed to go unattended to the mattins of the monks, and to continue in prayer till day-break." William of Malmesbury.

the inhabitants of the different districts, S. Edmondsbury abbey and town were laid under contribution. It was a difficult thing to raise money where all had been exhausted by former taxations, and it was only by threatening and putting to the torture that it could be obtained at all. In places where the shrine of a saint was situated the Church had generally been richly endowed with offerings, and these were kept with care, and were the last kind of property that was sacrificed; they were considered to belong to God, and to be under the immediate guardianship of the saint in whose honour they had been given. And yet most even of the shrines were now robbed and ruined. S. Edmond's, however, remained, and the blasphemous Sweyn rejoiced in such an opportunity of taunting the miserable citizens of the town while he converted its riches to his own purposes. I do not know what he said of S. Edmond, but we may guess the nature of it. When, a few days afterwards, he was seized with a severe illness, which attacked him like a sudden blow upon the head as he was riding on horseback, the boasting pagan immediately conceived the idea that the stroke had been inflicted by the saint whose power he had defied. The story goes that he saw S. Edmond hurl a lance at him;^p it is much more likely that his illness was a common case of apoplexy, or paralysis; but this, which is a mere conjecture, does not alter the moral cause of it, and there is no superstition in believing that the blasphemer of God and his saints had his course of sin suddenly arrested by a visible and immediate judgment. Those who ridicule

^p William of Malmesbury says he received the blow in sleep, not on horseback.

this sense of the story would do well to consider what circumstances corroborate it, viz. the death of Sweyn at this precise time, and the stately Church built over his remains by his son Canute, in honour of S. Edmond, whose monastery Canute also restored.

No sooner was Sweyn's death known, than the hearts of the English turned again towards their lawful sovereign, and they took immediate measures to recal him from banishment, conditioning, however, that he should rule them better than before. To this he gladly assented, and made a great many fair promises,^a but he returned in reality unreformed, to follow the same weak dissolute line of conduct. Had he chosen to do well, he had, under this new aspect of affairs, every facility for shewing himself a changed character, and the powerful assistance of his brave young son, Edmond Ironside, was an additional encouragement. As Edmond is thus suddenly brought before us, I would remark that he was not a son either of Elfgiva or Emma; who his mother was is a matter for conjecture; but, save in the disgrace attached to his birth, he was a worthy descendant from Alfred's princely lineage, and a contrast in all respects to his weak father.

Urging Ethelred to the utmost of his power, and daily gaining popularity with the people, the preliminary steps taken against the Danes were so vigorous as to drive Sweyn's son Canute, who was at first declared king, back to Denmark; and it really appears as if in his departure he had given up all hope of the crown of

^a Saxon Chronicle A.D. 1014. "He assured his people that he would be to them a loving lord, and amend all things which they misliked, and that each of those things should be forgiven which had been done or said to him, on condition that they all, with one consent, would be obedient to him without deceit."

England, for, when he arrived, he immediately commenced a negociation with his brother Harold for a share of the sovereignty of that country ; which, though it ended in nothing, I think it right to name, in proof of his intentions. Another presumption that he did not then mean to invade England, suggests itself from the treatment to which he subjected the young men^r who had been held as hostages by his father, for before setting sail for Denmark he had their hands, ears, and noses cut off, leaving them upon the shore in this miserable condition ; a piece of barbarity on his part that was, to say the least, most impolitic.

But the state of England soon altered for the worse, owing to Ethelred's incorrigible perverseness and cowardice. When, on his return from Normandy, he placed himself for once in his life at the head of his own army, the result was electric ; all hearts revived, and everywhere the people welcomed him ; as we have seen, he even drove Canute back to Denmark. But, instead of improving this success, his next act was to ravage the lands round Gainsborough, by way of revenging himself on those districts whose inhabitants had declared for Canute. Then, to curry favour with the army, he levied a tax of twenty-one thousand pounds, to be given in rewards to the soldiers, which, in its impoverished condition, the country was ill able to bear ; and he restored the traitor Edric to power, giving him, notwithstanding all his treasonable practices and improper advice, the command of one wing of the army, reserving the other for Edmond, and retiring himself into a safe quarter ; nor could his son's most

^r " Young men of great nobility and elegance." William of Malmesbury.

urgent entreaties prevail upon him ever again to expose his person in the field. The following year another circumstance added to his guilt and unpopularity. A great council was held at Oxford, and attended, amongst others, by Sigeferth and Morcard, Danes by descent, but holding a high rank,* and well affected towards Ethelred. Edric Streon, whose policy it was to remove all but his own friends from the royal favour, impeached these nobles to the king, accusing them of a secret plot against his life. Either from fear for himself, or an eye to their large estates, I am uncertain which, but Ethelred is charged with contriving their death without a trial; and if he was innocent of this dreadful crime there can be no doubt that he connived at it, and that Edric Streon, whose vile stratagem betrayed the thanes to a banquet, where they were murdered, by hired assassins, while under the effects of wine, remained at large, unquestioned and unpunished. This act of treachery was followed by the murder of all their retainers, who, after a vain attempt to resent the death of their lords, took refuge in S. Frideswide's Church, now the Cathedral, which was purposely set on fire by the command of the king or of his creature Edric Streon, to prevent their escape. As soon as this deed of blood had been perpetrated, the estates of the two nobles were seized and confiscated, and the young and beautiful widow of Sigeferth immured by royal authority in a monastery at Malmesbury. Look at this affair which way we will, it tells ill for Ethelred.

But his weakness and wickedness now touched at its termination. There was at this time among the leaders

* Called "the chief thanes in the seven boroughs." Saxon Chronicle,

of the public forces the Dane Thorkell,[†] a celebrated warrior, who, after one of the payments of money by which it had been attempted to buy off the enemy, had agreed to serve Ethelred with his forty-five ships, and remain in allegiance to him. But when public events produced an increasing conviction of the king's incompetency to rule, Thorkell found it his interest to abscond, and, sailing with nine ships of war to Denmark, he speedily conveyed to Canute tidings which determined him once more to invade this country ; a resolution which he shortly followed up. His fleet was a magnificent one, two hundred ships or more, (some northern writers say many more), their prows were ornamented with gold and silver, and glittered in the sun like flames of fire, and they had, as figure-heads, lions, dragons, and images of men. The crews of these ships also were picked men, not a slave was to be found amongst them, nor a single individual who had any personal defect or infirmity. The splendour of such preparations, besides being in keeping with the character of the period, shews that Canute was now in earnest ; and the description of the fleet gives us a good idea of the state of naval art in those days. But whatever advance might have been made in the outward fittings of vessels of war, there was but little improvement in the vessels themselves ; they were still built like barges, and propelled by rowers.[‡] The account of one which

[†] "Thorkell, a Danish count, came with his fleet to England." Quoted from Sim. Dunelm. in Hist. Coll.

[‡] Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 180. I cannot find out when the use sails instead of oars became general, but I imagine it could not be until just before the Conquest. Sails are frequently mentioned at earlier periods, but they were evidently more for ornament than use, as the same vessels carried banks of rowers : a purple sail is enumerated among the fittings of a ship presented to king Athelstan by Harold of Norway. William of Malmesbury.

king Olave captured, and which was considered the wonder of its times, mentions thirty-four banks of rowers as its complement of men, and that it was of an enormous length, and gilded at either end, with a dragon for its figure-head. It was called the "Long Serpent."

Ethelred, timid without cause, had now good reason to be alarmed, and it seems that his natural weakness was very much increased by his perilous situation; his terrors became uncontrollable, and when wanted to head the army, he was either sick or feigning sick. His noble son toiled in vain against such difficulties. On the news of Canute's arrival he assembled the troops, but could not bring them into action, for Edric, instead of supporting him, plotted against his life, and the army, becoming divided, turned its back upon the enemy. With considerable labour Edmond again gathered together the forces, but Ethelred refusing to lead them, they were disbanded. A third time Edmond raised an army, by threatening severe penalties against those who refused to join him, and promising to prevail upon his father to take the command.* After much persuasion Ethelred made a pretence to join them, but becoming frightened, left them immediately, and shut himself up in London. Then Edmond, seeing that all depended on promptness and energy, hastened into Northumberland, to gain earl Uthred, the thane of that province, and the king's son-in-law, to assist him. Uthred gave an outward assent to this proposition, but after allowing his soldiers to plunder Staffordshire,

* They were called out by edict, and then treated as if they had assembled of themselves, and so dismissed. Henry of Huntingdon.

Shropshire, and Leicestershire, he at last sent in his submission to Canute, for which, at Edric's suggestion, who had now openly joined the Danes, he was put to death, instead of rewarded. Another powerful noble, Thorketyl, and forty of Uthred's retainers, suffered with him; and Edric, who had betrayed them, succeeded to Uthred's earldom of Northumberland.⁷ The above is a slight sketch of the treachery and mismanagement which makes the close of Ethelred's reign as wearisome as its commencement. But the king's illness was now no longer a feint, and, in the year 1016, he ended his miserable existence. It was the fiftieth of his age, and the thirty-seventh of his reign. Will it be believed that some historians are to be found who praise him, because he was an enemy to the Church? I do not think, however, that his favour was of much value to any particular class; his lusts alone, and those who ministered to them, were the chief objects of his care. He passed a few laws which have been called good, and now and then did well in the administration of justice; these were the accidents of his rule, and belonged not to it. The worst of men have their moments of amendment, when appalled and harassed by the effects of their own evil doings; these do not merit praise, they tend the rather to increase their condemnation, for they are acknowledgments that the sense of individual responsibility is not wholly decayed from within them, that they can still discern between right and wrong, good and evil. Ethelred's name the "Unready," is sufficiently significant of his worthlessness.

Of his children eight survived him; Edmond Iron-

⁷ Henry of Huntingdon.

side, then Edwy, and three daughters, (his children by Elfgiva), and Emma's sons, Alfred and Edward, and daughter Goda. His three eldest daughters married in England, Edric Streon and Uthred being husbands to two of them, and Edgiva's husband was an English earl,² who fell in battle against the Danes. Emma's daughter made a foreign alliance, and her sons will be mentioned hereafter.

Edmond Ironside's short reign may be quickly described. Its brilliance was the result of those noble qualities by which he was distinguished, its misfortunes were mainly caused by the traitor to whose advice Ethelred owed many of his reverses, and whose wish seemed to be to compass the ruin both of father and son; with what ulterior end it is not easy to determine, so closely is it veiled by the obscurity which surrounds this particular period, over which he appears here and there rather like a will o' the wisp or demoniac influence, than as a human being, formed to feel and suffer through the same sensations and in the manner that others do. Singular it is, but it is a fact, that this Edric worked on the strong mind of Ethelred's straightforward son as much as on the father's weakness; and the first we hear of him in Edmond's reign is that he fought openly for Canute, while a page further on he is pardoned and received back to favour by Edmond. He is indeed an enigma, and it is unfortunate that we do not possess the means of investigating his character and designs more closely.

When by Sweyn's sudden death, and his natural right to reign, it might have been expected that Edmond

² Earl Athelstan. Saxon Chronicle, year 1010.

should succeed without opposition to his crown, difficulties arose in a new quarter. The clergy, hitherto so faithful to the royal race, either fearful of Canute's displeasure, tired of the unsettled state of the country, and doubtful of Edmond's eventual position, or bought over by the Danes, took the unexpected measure of abjuring the race of Ethelred, and going over to the side of Canute; for which purpose they retired to Southampton in a body, and tendered their submission to the Danish chieftain. This must be taken as an appalling proof of the state of desperation into which they, and indeed all ranks, had been thrown by the late trying events, and the distrust they began to feel of arriving at anything better. The archbishop Living, however, formed a noble exception to this desertion; he assembled the loyal citizens of London, and as many of the nobility as were left, and solemnly crowned the young prince. The history of the Church at this time is almost without interest, there were but few leading characters among the clergy; but it is pleasing to be able to number some who were faithful to their sovereign and to their vows. I would instance bishop Elfsige, called also Elsinus; he it was who, crossing to Normandy with the queen, and acting as chaplain to her, and tutor to the young princes, employed his time whilst there in making a collection of valuable articles for his monastery, and he purchased the body of S. Florentine for five hundred pounds, and took it back to England with him. The account of this transaction is full of interest, and shews the value attached to the relics of saints. The poor Florentine monks, who were driven to the sale of what they deemed so precious by

the horrors of famine, in parting with the body of their saint and the founder of their monastery, fell upon the expedient of cutting off his head, which they reverently preserved. Yet did numbers of them, in after years, undergo the fatigue and risk of a journey to Peterborough, to offer up their devotions at the shrine to which the body had been transferred.

The abbot of Croyland, too, is honourably mentioned; he entertained and supported all among the neighbouring brotherhoods who were dispersed and scattered from their homes; giving them food and shelter for more than two years, at his own charge.*

Canute's first attack upon Edmond's territory was directed against London, for until this position was gained there seemed little hope of the security of his other conquests. But notwithstanding a trench which he dug round the city, so that, by introducing into it the waters of the Thames, he was able to bring his ships above London bridge, and to cut off the supplies of the inhabitants on three sides, his efforts were neutralized by their firmness.

Meanwhile Edmond had marched to Wessex, had been well received there, and was on his return at the head of a large army. In the subsequent engagement at Penn, near Gillingham, one of five which he fought with Canute in a single year, he was victorious. In the second general battle, which took place in Wiltshire, much bravery was shewn on both sides, but Edmond was gaining ground rapidly, when Edric came in sight of his soldiers holding up the bloody head of a man who bore so close a resemblance to the young prince that he

* Ingram's Diss. Saxon Chron.

might easily have been mistaken for him. "Fly," cried Edric, "fly, English, Edmond is dead.^b"

An immediate panic in Edmond's army was the result, but the brave young king, whose visor concealed his features, threw it off instantly and rushed in front of the line uncovered. His presence restored confidence to his men, but not until much mischief had been caused by Edric's deceit; for the ranks had been broken in the confusion of the first outcry, and had lost the advantage they before possessed.^c Late in the evening of the second day the contest raged with unabated fury, the night closed upon it, but harassed and wearied as Edmond must have been, he was still in good heart as to the termination of the affray; he resolved to renew it early in the morning with fresh vigour. Canute, however, had had enough of it, and, with the celerity that marked all his movements, held a brief council with his captains, made stealthy preparations to march, and was far on his way before the morning light streaked the hills. He began to see that in the open field Edmond was quite his match, and he would not risk another day's fighting. At Edric's suggestion, who still continued with the Danes, it was arranged that that nobleman should now seek to be reconciled to Edmond, because his presence on the opposite side might do more mischief, since he might betray all their movements to Canute. Canute, who, as it appeared afterwards, disliked the treacherous creature more than he dared to shew, was nevertheless not unwilling to make use of him

^b "Haro, haro, flee Englonde! dead is Edmonde!" Andrewes's History. See also Henry of Huntingdon, Hov. &c.

^c A description of the way of conducting battles among the Anglo Saxons may be seen in Strutt's English Antiquities.

in this manner. Edric accordingly sued to his natural and lawful prince for pardon, which, wonderful to say, he obtained. Thus was the ruin of the English monarch ensured.

Another attack of Canute's on London proved equally unsuccessful with the former one, its brave citizens were much straitened, but they kept their ground; in the language of the old Chronicle, "the Almighty God delivered the city." Then the king met the enemy for the fourth time at Brentford, and drove them before him into Kent, obliging them to take refuge in the isle of Shepey; but this last victory was rendered fruitless by Edric's advice, who caused the royal troops to give up the pursuit too soon, by which the enemy gained time to rally. The great and final action at Assingdon^d was lost by Edmond, entirely through the presence of Edric with the army. On this occasion the "flower of the English nobility" were collected against Canute, for now that Edmond's courage and abilities had been proved there was as much enthusiasm in his favour as there had before been languor and distaste to his sovereignty. The contest was long and bloody, but was decided by Edric's flight at the head of the forces which he commanded. After that, all was disorder among the English, although they continued bravely fighting for long after the moon had risen; when, becoming desperate, they at last gave way. It must have been a sad sight to walk that field of battle in search of the missing and killed, to unclothe the shut helmets, and identify the pale countenances of the Anglo-Saxon nobles. In one

^d In Essex.

• "Flos nobilitatis Brittanie." Henry of Huntingdon.

part of the field lay the brave and faithful Ulfketyl whose virtues are known to us, in another earl Ethelwerd ;^f earl Godwin of Lyndsey, and Elfric, were also there. A little removed from these slept bishop Ednoth and abbot Wulsy. A few years earlier, and it had been no unusual thing to meet with ecclesiastics in a scene of bloodshed, or even as actors in the fray themselves, but we are expressly told that these took no part in what had passed, they were engaged in prayer for the success of their king, and while so engaged the shaft reached them which gave them entrance into a world of peace.

. Edmond escaped with his life ; dispirited and almost alone he made his way from the painful scene in the direction of Gloucester. The next morning the field of battle was covered with Danes, busily employed in burying their own slain, and robbing the dead bodies of the fallen English.

Canute now thought his triumph complete, but he was mistaken. Edmond had not gained the surname of "Ironside" for nought, and to raise another army was with him but the work of a few days. Dearly too was he now beloved, his subjects felt that they could confide in him and flocked eagerly to his aid.

This rapidity of action startled Canute, and disposed him to question more than ever his eventual success, while Edmond was beginning to feel sadly worn down by his adversary's perseverance. Both parties, in short, began to wish to come to some kind of agreement, but the means by which this was effected are differently stated and must be left in uncertainty.

One account is that the nobility on either side begged

^f Ethelwin, earl of East Anglia. Henry of Huntingdon.

that the cause might be decided by single combat to avoid more bloodshed, and that in consequence of their wishes, Edmond challenged Canute to fight with him ;^s it is doubtful if the challenge were accepted, but an armistice was concluded, and the kingdom parted, much, it is said, to Edmond's regret. By this partition he remained king of all the country south of Thames, including London and Essex ; Canute governed the Danes to the northward of the boundary.

But Edric Streon had yet another crime to accomplish, and scarcely had this amicable arrangement been effected, when the young king died a bloody death, by the hands of assassins hired by the traitor, or, as some suppose, by a stab from his own son. This took place in the year 1016, and with him ended, for the time, the line of the Saxon kings. Few have deserved more praise of their country for graceful qualities and persevering courage and energy, more pity for a disturbed and painful career : it is a thought of peace that when all these troubles were over he found a resting place by his grandfather Edgar, in England's venerable pile, the

^s The following is the account given in Cressy, taken by him from Matt. of Westminster :—"There is in the middle of the Severn an isle called Oleneige. Into this the two kings, in most splendid arms, were wafted, where, in the sight of both their armies, they began a combat ; which continued a good space without any apparent advantage. But at length king Edmond's fury adding new strength to him, his blows were so thick and weighty, that Canutus, perceiving his own forces to diminish, conceived a resolution to attempt the ending of the quarrel by a treaty. But being crafty, and fearing lest his disadvantage should be apparent to his enemy, he recollected all his spirits, and with admirable courage rushed upon king Edmond. After which he withdrew himself aside, and desired him to suspend the combat awhile, and give him the hearing. King Edmond, being of a most sweet disposition, set down his shield to the ground, and expected what he would say. Then began Canutus, 'Generous prince,' said he, 'hitherto I have had a covetous desire of your kingdom, but now I do much more earnestly desire your friendship than your estate,' &c. &c. 'Then either proved other, first with sharp spears, and after with keen and cutting swords.'" *Fabian*. See also, for an account of this combat, Henry of Huntingdon, *William of Malmesbury*, &c.

abbey Church of Glastonbury, which had happily been less despoiled than most other religious foundations. Edmond married the murdered Sigeferth's widow, whom curiosity prompted him to visit after hearing of her husband's death, and in due time he also possessed himself of that thane's confiscated estates. This was done against his father's will, and appears like an exception to his usual character of justice and moderation, but we are perhaps imperfectly informed. He left three sons, Edward, Edmond, and Edwin ; the last was illegitimate.

LECTURE XXV.

A.D. 1017—1035.

REIGN OF CANUTE THE DANE.

A DANE king over England! What but misery in such a prospect? But the greatest misery of all was that the nation acquiesced, with a few exceptions, in its degradation. A constant succession of sufferings had blunted and destroyed the feelings of the many, and this is not to be wondered at, although it is a melancholy proof that national judgments have sometimes an annihilating rather than a purifying effect; that before they are sent the day of amendment has gone by. And yet there are occasions when they are meant to break down the strong-holds of pride and ambition, and self-willed rebellion against God, and to bring men into an orderly submission to His government; a state, at the same time, of thankfulness, for the privilege of serving Him, and of fear to be deprived of it. Judging from the way in which Canute was welcomed, they were not many who felt thus; but some there must have been in whose hearts the beautiful Lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah found a fit echo; because there “were none to comfort them,” for the “adversary had spread his hands upon all their pleasant things,” “the heathen had defiled their sanctuary.”^a

^a Lamentations i. 8.

Alas, the greater number of the English were busy only with personal views and schemes, and quite ready to serve the Danish king, and abjure all former principles and associations, to swear belief in what he asserted, and, at his command, swallow the dust upon which he walked.

It was, we must think, for the sake of the few righteous rather than for these, that the very fate which to us seems so dreadful in anticipation, was singularly and unexpectedly averted, and in a way which none could have foreseen ; for Canute himself had determined to change his conduct, to restore where he had wasted, to build where he had thrown down. And if he is already known to us as energetic and shrewd, as mainly successful through these qualities, we shall the more easily recognise in him the deep and far-sighted politician, whose aim it became to retain what he had conquered, and to dispense the blessings of an orderly government in those districts which his sword had rendered desolate. In such a light it would be impossible not to admire him, could we look upon him only as a heathen ; for, if a Christian, his character demands another judgment ; however improved in some respects, it will be seen that it was deficient in justice and truth, that it was that of a man without the fear of God before his eyes. It was indeed very late in his reign before his religion could be called anything but state policy, whatever his convictions might have been ; this will become evident as we proceed.

Canute's first act of sovereignty was to summon a council in London, and we are told that it was numer-

ously attended.^b All the “witan” of the nation, the thanes, clergy, and great men from every part of the kingdom, were commanded to be present, when he formally proposed himself as their future king, commencing the proceedings with this audacious declaration: “that it seemed to him clear, by the terms he had so lately concluded with his predecessor Edmond, that that prince intended him to succeed, since no mention had been made, in those terms, of the other heirs to the crown!” This startling announcement appalled the assembly, and took them quite by surprise; they were hardly prepared to assert that the heirs to the crown were legally excluded by their own father, and they knew well that Edmond could never have meant such a construction to be put upon his treaty. Not one, however, had the honesty to stand up on the side of truth, or to plead for the absent princes; they lulled their consciences by this evasion:—They replied, “that Edmond’s children being so young when he died, he certainly meant that Canute should take the office of guardian to them, since they were themselves unfit to govern.”^c Having agreed to all that their conqueror required of them on other points, the assembly dispersed.

Soon after Canute was solemnly crowned by Living, archbishop of Canterbury, whereupon he divided the kingdom into four provinces, Mercia, East Anglia, Northumbria, and Wessex, which was another master-

^b See Cressy, Fabian, Roger Hoveden, &c.

^c “This testimony they gave, calling God to witness of the truth of it: for they feared his (Canute’s) power, and hoped withal to receive a great reward from him; but it was a false and fraudulent testimony.” Quoted from Florilegus, in Cressy’s Church History.

stroke of policy, although meant to be but a temporary arrangement. The fact was, he was desirous to quiet for a time, by so promoting and employing them, those men whose restless ambition might come in the way of his own power. Mercia, therefore, was bestowed upon Edric, East Anglia awarded to Thorkell, Northumbria was given to the powerful Danish earl Eric, and Wessex he reserved as the seat of his own government.

He appears next to have bent his energies to the security of his crown, by three other methods which suggested themselves to him. The first was to marry Ethelred's widow, queen Emma, and so gain her influence on his side ; the second, quietly to banish and otherwise get rid of the many heirs to the throne, lest the popular feeling should turn in their favour ; the third, to remove such nobles as he had reason to suspect of interested designs, among whom Edric was pre-eminent ; for, although Canute had allowed this traitor to serve him while he needed it, he had determined never to trust him, well knowing that he could have no real security as long as Edric was at large. He is thought to have spoken with a deeper meaning than the words seemed to convey, when he promised that he would exalt him above the highest in the realm.⁴ An opportunity of fulfilling this pledge soon occurred. Edric, although made thane of Mercia, was dissatisfied ; it was unlikely that a man of his character could rest short of anything but the kingdom ; and he soon afterwards reproached Canute for not keeping faith with one who had been such a friend to him. "It was for your

⁴ This speech of Canute's has Henry of Huntingdon for its authority ; it is doubted by some writers.

sake," he said, "that I deserted Edmond, and afterwards caused him to be put to death." Here was just the admission that Canute wanted. "Vile traitor!" he exclaimed, "who ownest unblushingly to the murder of thy king; thou hast pronounced sentence upon thyself:" and calling the earl Eric, who was at hand, he requested him to dispatch Edric immediately, which he effected by cutting off his head with a stroke of his battle-axe, and thus he met his doom. His head was placed on high over the gateway of the castle where Canute was staying, (supposed to be the tower of London),^e and his body was thrown into the Thames.

An embassy having been dispatched to king Richard of Normandy, demanding the hand of his sister, Canute awaited the result with anxiety. It might be anticipated that the widow of Ethelred would refuse such an alliance with indignation, but this was not the case; she liked too well the title of queen of England, and her better principle gave way to her ambition. Shall we blame her and pass on? This would be easy, for she occupies only a subordinate position in history, and excites but a reflected interest, but I wish to make one observation upon the subject; that such a way of acting is perfectly common, even among those from whom (as from queen Emma) a far higher line of conduct might reasonably be expected, so that we ought to beware lest in censuring her we condemn ourselves. Is it not the case, especially in forming the marriage tie, as well as in many other circumstances of life, that we

^e Some say it was not built at that time, but Henry Huntingdon's expression, "the highest tower of the castle of London," shews that there was a tower of London then, if not the present structure, and the position, near the Thames, also corresponds.

continually fall from the standard which, in the hours of prayer and meditation, we have aimed at? Do we not make our principles to bend to our feelings or worldly interests, instead of putting our duty first in everything? Queen Emma probably argued thus with herself—that she was a lone woman, and needed a protector; that Canute was not a bad man at heart; that Ethelred had been a bad husband, and did not deserve to have respect paid to his memory; that it was for the interests of her sons that she should make Canute her friend, and so on. And her next step was the sacrifice of their interests, by giving her consent to exclude them by her marriage settlement from their inheritance, on condition that her children by this second marriage, if she had any, should take precedence in the succession of Canute's other heirs. To the English nation, who had become sincerely attached to queen Emma, her return to live amongst them was a joyful event: she seems indeed to have had many good qualities.

Not so defensible were Canute's intentions with regard to the princes of the blood royal; these he scrupled not to remove by the darkest expedients. Two, the Edward and Edmond before mentioned, whose guardianship he had undertaken, were sent to Olave king of Sweden, half brother to Canute, nominally to travel, but he was commissioned secretly to destroy them. It is to Olave's credit that he did not choose to comply with such a vile injunction, but transferred the young princes to the king of Hungary, in whose care they were safer than at his court. Two other princes, both called Edwin, one a son of Ethelred, the other of Edmond, he outlawed, condemning them to fly the

country ; Edwin the Etheling, Ethelred's son, was afterwards recalled, but Canute's suspicions returning, he caused him to be put to death ; and Edwin Ceorlcynig, or king of the Ceorls, a popular title which he acquired, I know not why,^f after suffering great hardships during his banishment, was, through queen Emma's intercession,^g received back into favour.

Canute's next measure was his dismissal of a large part of the Danish army, which he sent back to Denmark. They had so long held the country in a state of terror that their removal was a prudent thought, and brought him much popularity ; but to effect it, it was necessary to raise upon the impoverished districts an enormous fine, not less than £72,000. Still even this suffering was preferable to their hated presence, and the money was collected. The inhabitants of London were very unfairly dealt with on the occasion, being made to pay, as their proportion, not less than £10,500 of the fine, perhaps to punish them for their obstinate fidelity to their Saxon king. It should be observed that London was now becoming an important place, through the strength of its position, the tried valour of the inhabitants, and the many privileges bestowed upon them as rewards for different services. These united causes working on the character of the people, they began to assume too much independence, and to withhold their assent to any proposed measure, except on certain conditions which they prescribed themselves ; so that London, with its ealdormen and burgesses, henceforward held the rank more of a province than a

^f Cressy calls it a disgraceful title.

^g "At queen Emma's instigation." Speed's History; his authority is *Matt. Westminster*.

city. This leads me to speak of the increased trade at this time between these islands and other parts of the world ; a sign of their growing greatness. London and Bristol were especially important through their merchants, and you will be surprised to hear that one great source of traffic, even in this early period, was in slaves, white slaves, it is true, but still they were slaves in every sense of the word ; bought and sold, and devised by will, at the pleasure of their owners.^h Imagine a lady of those days making a fortune by speculating in slaves ! This is told of the princess Githa, whose marriage I shall notice by and by. Slaves, oxen, and

^h "It was not till after the conquest that their sale abroad was entirely prohibited." Heywood's Anglo-Saxon Government. "Whatever the origin of serfage may have been, it can hardly be questioned that the lot of the serf was a hard one ; and this perhaps not so much from the amount of labour required of him, as from the total irresponsibility of the master, in the eye of the law, as to all dealings between himself and his theow. The Christian clergy indeed did all they could to mitigate its hardships, but when has even Christianity itself been triumphant over the selfishness and the passions of the mass of men ? . . . In contemplation of law, in fact, the slave is the absolute property of his lord, a chattel to be disposed of at the lord's pleasure, and having a value only for the benefit of the lord, or of some public authority in his place. The serf cannot represent himself or others, his interests must be guarded by others, for he himself has no standing in any public court. He is not in any fridh borh, or association for mutual guarantee, for he has nothing of his own to defend, and no power to defend what another has. If he be slain by a stranger, his lord claims the damages ; if the lord himself slay him, it is but the loss of so much value,—a horse, an ox gone—more or less. . . . In yet pagan times general kindness of disposition, habits of domestic intercourse, perhaps the suggestions of self-interest, may have tended to raise the condition of the serf even to the restoration of freedom ; but it was the especial honour and glory of Christianity, that while it broke the spiritual bonds of sin, it ever actively laboured to relieve the heavy burden of social servitude. We are distinctly told that bishop Wilfrid, on receiving the grant of Selsey from Caedwalla, of Wessex, immediately manumitted two hundred and fifty unfortunates, whom he found there attached to the soil,—that those whom, by baptism, he had rescued from servitude to devils, might, by the grant of liberty, be rescued from servitude to man. In this spirit of charity the clergy obtained respite from labour for the theow on the Sabbath, on certain high festivals, and on the days which preceded or followed them : the lord who compelled his theow to labour between the sunset on Saturday and the sunset on Sunday, forfeited him altogether ; probably, at first, to the king or the geref, but, in the time of Cnut, the serf thus forfeited was to become folk free. . . . It cannot indeed be denied that the slave might be sold like any other chattel, and that even as late as Ædelred and Cnut, the law ventured to prohibit no more than the selling him into heathendom, or without some fault on his part ; nor can we believe that acts of the grossest oppression and tyranny were unfrequent." Kemble's Saxons in England, b. i. c. 8.

sheep, were commonly classed together, under the head of "live money."

But the change the most important to the country arose from Canute's far-sighted conduct as regards the clergy. He had now been for some time in England, and he must have remarked the general estimation in which they were held by the people, their influence with all classes, and the value of their good-will. It is an enigma which we are unfortunately unable to solve how far what he had witnessed had affected his own convictions. That his moral conduct was unreformed we have proof in the unscrupulous worldliness of most of his arrangements, and the daring crimes with which they were intermingled ; but, on the other hand, he was a Dane, which is some excuse for him ; for the Danes, trained as men of blood from their cradles, were taught by their religion rather to glory in successful fraud than in the opposite virtues of peace, love, humility, and meekness. A man so educated would probably look on such virtues, where they did exist, with a suspicious eye, viewing them as specious unrealities, assumed for the purposes of priestcraft, or to veil deeper designs.¹ The growth, therefore, of the spiritual faculty would be proportionably slow, but it might nevertheless be begun ; holy chants might have left an echo in Canute's heart, serious and startling truths might be slumbering upon his conscience, awaiting the awakening breath of the Spirit, and in the solemn ceremonial of the Catholic Church and her constantly recurring services, he might

¹ "Canute, in the beginning of his reign, was, in this respect, not much better than his father ; but afterwards, owing, probably, to the influence of his Norman wife Emma, he became, *outwardly at least*, a very zealous Christian." Mallet's Northern Antiquities, p. 143.

be learning to perceive more than a mere engine to infatuate and overawe an ignorant and benighted populace.

Yet supposing this to have been the case, it was a long and weary interval before the mists with which sin had enveloped his mind began to roll off, and the glory of the Uncreated Godhead dawned upon it, ere he acknowledged to his surprised and servile courtiers, as he sat by the rolling surges, suffering them to cover him with spray, "There is One Who ruleth over all, before Whom the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers : " "see now, of what use is the vain title of king? I cannot, by command of mine, stay one wave from its rude assault. Let us call Him alone king, Who is the King of Kings ; Whose empire is in Heaven, and over the sea, as well as on the land."

This happened much later in his reign, but at the time of which we were just now speaking he made such beneficial laws and shewed a disposition so favourable to the Church, that it might well afford a subject of thanksgiving and praise to her faithful members. Nor, if the clergy then living were less distinguished than many whose names are familiar to us, have we any reason to doubt their active co-operation for the public good. Much was done by them to restore and reclaim ; and this is easily shewn by the laws which Canute passed, while acting under their advice and suggestions.* I should not omit to name one provision of these laws, which of itself tended to allay more than anything the feverish restlessness of the disaffected of both nations ;

* Agelnoth, it is said, did encourage the king in good actions, and terrify him in his excesses. Cressy, quoting from Godwin in *Episc. Cant.*

and in extending between them that equality without which there could be no reasonable hope of peace or union in the land. It was proclaimed by Canute, that no difference should be made between the English and Danes in justice shown to the latter, and no wanton outrage on the part of either left unpunished. This policy was borne out in the enactments which followed, and it might be said to be the first stone of his government.

Under such favourable auspices a change was soon visible in the face of the country. villages re-appeared upon the thickened wastes, minsters were restored, and Churches and chapels built, remains of which may yet be recognised in the broad square Saxon towers, of considerable beauty, which are scattered through the eastern parts of the country. Some of these marked the scenes of the late engagements with the Danes, as the one at Assington, where a priest and choir were maintained, whose office it was to pray for the slain; others succeeded to former edifices of which the fabric had disappeared during the war. Agriculture, too, revived; over the broad corn districts billows of waving gold gladdened the eye, the cattle, with their attendants, were allowed to wander long distances from the homesteads in search of pasture, and a look of confidence returned to the care-worn features of both ceorles and serfs.

It was said of Canute that he was never unemployed. When engaged in war, he fought or marched by day, and held his councils by night; when ruling, his vigi-

¹ Knutor, which had been burnt by king Sweyn, was, with its minster, restored by Canute at the instigation of a noble called Ethelred. See Cressy's Church History. Also the monastery of S. Benedict, at Holm, in Norfolk.

lance was equally on the alert. Take, as an instance of his sound judgment in this respect, the mode which he adopted to restrain the excesses of the soldiers. These were not subjected to a severe military law, but classed into a society, and a court, or gild,^m was instituted, by which offences against its rules were tried. He made himself the grand master of this order ; and as it was a great honour to belong to it, so it was a reproach to be turned out.ⁿ The plan answered admirably ; many men of the highest rank aspired to have their names enrolled, and since from this society Canute's body guard were selected, the equipment and appearance of its members was of course an object of consideration. They seem to have been a fine body of men, and the arms they carried were axes, halberds, and cutlasses, inlaid with gold.

Thus it was that England was, in less than two years, more tranquil than for a very long period before, and the affairs of Denmark calling for Canute's interference, he resolved to make a voyage to this part of his kingdom, taking with him all such nobles as might break the peace in his absence if left behind. Of these Edric had been removed, as well as Eric his executioner, the earl of Northumbria, who, upon some pretence, was banished ; but Thorkell could not be depended on, and there were two other aspiring spirits whom it was necessary to look after closely, Ulf, brother-in-law to Canute, and his companion in arms, and Godwin, Ulf's

^m Witherlags ret. Lappenburg.

ⁿ The degrading epithet of Nithing, or Niding, was applied to one expelled from this body. The name is most probably of northern extraction, although in common use in England after the conquest. By "Nithing" was implied "a base, villainous wretch, a dastardly coward, a sordid, stingy, worthless creature." See, for a lengthened account of the term, Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, p. 154, 358.

foster-son, but who was in reality the son of that Wulnoth whose banishment took place in the preceding reign. He had returned incognito to England, and was living in the guise of a shepherd when his wife committed her boy to Ulf's charge, to be educated as became his birth. Thorkell had, it appears, instigated the murder of S. Elphege, and was justly obnoxious to the people.

Canute remained away during the winter of 1019, in which he made a campaign against the Wends, or Vandals ;^o and these having raised an army to repel his attack, the forces of both nations met late one evening, and encamped very near each other. All the English who had accompanied Canute were with him in the field, and formed a sort of auxiliary body, under the command of Godwin. An action being expected to take place with the morning light, what was Canute's consternation when, on arising, he found the camp deserted. He could only conclude that the English had played him a Dane's trick, and gone over to the enemy ; but it is to their honour that they had no such idea, the fact being that Godwin, burning to display his valour, had persuaded the soldiers to make a secret sally against the foe, and as they were already on their return, having obtained a complete victory, Canute's fears were soon very pleasantly removed. This spirited affair was so much after his own heart, that he pardoned Godwin his breach of military discipline, and made him earl of Kent upon the spot, giving him in marriage the lady Githa, sister to Ulf, which, as he had

^o "The Vandals sore annoyed his subjects." Speed's History of Great Britain.

married Canute's sister, Astrith, was considered a great honour, since it brought him into a near connexion with Canute himself. This is the lady whose way of improving her fortune by the sale and purchase of slaves has been already commented on.^p From this time Godwin rose rapidly into power.

Canute returned to England in the spring, when he convened a council at Cirencester, one of the proceedings of which assembly was that act of outlawry which made prince Edwin Ceorlcynig a wanderer. It is due to Canute to remark that the particular time at which this took place strongly favours the idea that Edwin had taken advantage of his absence ; and as Ethelwerd the eorlderman shared the sentence, there might have been a rising in the provinces in behalf of the old race. And, besides this, it is certain that Thorkell soon after fell under suspicion. There are two accounts of his sentence, one that he was banished, another that when arraigned he took refuge in voluntary flight ; and, by a like discrepancy of statement, one history tells us that immediately on landing in Denmark he was put to death, another that he was forgiven by Canute, and appointed deputy-governor in his northern kingdom. Both statements, however, agree in the fact that his influence was removed from England, which is all that is of importance to the narrative.

This year the archbishop of Canterbury died, and the energetic Athelnoth^q was elected to the dignity of metro-

^p "She was in the habit of purchasing companies of slaves in England, and sending them into Denmark, more especially girls, whose beauty and age rendered them more valuable, that she might accumulate money by this horrid traffic." William of Malmesbury.

^q Saxon Chron. Athelnoth was surnamed "the Good," on account of his meekness and humility.

politan ; and the death of Wulfstan, archbishop of York, soon after, raised Elfric Putta (supposed to be the same with Elfric Bata,) to the episcopal throne of that see. Athelnoth went to Rome for his pall, and returned home, it is said, with a "full blessing." From this period until 1025 nothing was heard of but home reforms, revisions of the laws, celebrations, and visits, or rather progresses to different places, most of which were undertaken by Canute with an ostensibly religious object. But, whatever his real views were, whether he honoured his Maker in these actions, or only sought honour and popularity for himself, the feelings of the well-disposed must have been refreshed and cheered, and the cause of religion promoted. It could be no unwelcome news to such to hear that queen Emma had persuaded the king to atone, as far as lay in his power, for the treatment of the blessed S. Elphege, by a solemn festival in his memory. This consisted in the disinterring of his body, which, as you will recollect, had been buried at S. Paul's, and its removal to its natural home in Canterbury Cathedral. Few were alive whom he loved, they had been united to him in death, having shared a less memorable, but still distinguished fate ; perhaps on this very account there was more unmixed joy among his townsmen in the manner of his return to them. It was truly a festival when, for him whom they had lost, the imperfect man struggling against infirmities, they received back the saint and martyr, "whose warfare was accomplished," whose crown was won. And if they possessed but the earthly part, the circlet from whence the jewel had been unset, was not this in itself a priceless treasure, to be reve-

rently preserved? The day would arrive when He Who had withdrawn the gem would claim the setting; while, in the interval, He continued to bless those who held it in charge for Him.

A few details of the solemnity have been preserved. At the appointed hour Canute himself repaired to the Church of S. Paul's, and, in the presence of the archbishop, lifted the holy remains in his own arms, and transferred them to the receptacle or shell prepared for the purpose; numbers of the clergy were in attendance, and by them they were conveyed to a ship in the Thames, to which the archbishop had proceeded to await their arrival, surrounded by his suffragans. I suppose that Canute accompanied the body all the way; we only hear of queen Emma's separate journey to Rochester by land, with the infant prince Hardicanute, and a vast body of the nobility, when the rest of the distance was performed in procession, crowds of people congregating from all parts to swell the triumph, and strains of chanted praise filling the air with gladness. On its arrival at Christ Church Cathedral, the body was deposited on the north side of the altar, the whole ceremony having occupied eight days.

Such was the government that won for Canute the title of "Great;" what remains untold, if we except his journey to Rome, has little interest for us, but I must not omit the mention of two expeditions to the north, besides the one already described. The first of these, undertaken against the Swedes, in the year 1025, was unfortunate in many ways, the battle which decided the contest turning unfavourably for Canute, who was obliged to acknowledge himself beaten, and who left

many of his bravest soldiers, both English and Danes, in the field. In the second, his opponent was the Christian king Olave, of Norway, whose territories he had invaded, and, I suppose, might and not right prevailed. The unfortunate Olave was dethroned, and afterwards slain by his own subjects, Canute seizing his kingdom. Fifty ships filled with thanes gave a dignity to this expedition. One result of Canute's northern conquests cannot be regretted : it was the establishment of Christianity in these bleak regions on a permanent basis ; sees were founded, and English bishops appointed to many of them, Canute's ambition being to gain for the English Church the ascendancy of the entire north. In this, however, he was disappointed ; for the learned and zealous archbishop Unwan, primate of the Church of Hamburg, went so far as to detain Gerbrand, one of the English bishops, in prison, until he acknowledged his supremacy, when he dismissed him with many presents and kind wishes to his royal master, sending Canute a letter explanatory of his interference. Canute took the reproof cautiously, and afterwards made an alliance of friendship with the powerful prelate.

About this time Ulf fell a victim to his royal brother-in-law's untamed passions. They had been playing at chess, and Canute lost a knight to Ulf, which loss he refused to admit. Ulf, impatient of this injustice, rushed from the apartment. When he reached the door, "Dost thou run, thou coward?" exclaimed the king. "Not so fast," replied the earl, "as you would have done had I not come to your rescue when you were in the hands of the Swedes," Bitter taunt ! which

engendered a wrath upon which the sun went down ; and that sun arose the next day not to set again until Canute had imbrued his hands in the blood of his relative. "Go and stab Ulf dead," was his waking command. Was there no one to warn the unhappy noble ? We may believe that warning had been given him, or his knowledge of Canute was a sufficient ground of alarm ; for he was found in Church, where he had taken refuge. He had reason to hope that Canute would respect the house of God, and that in a little while his wrath might pass. So also thought the individual who had been commissioned to kill him ; for he returned to Canute with the intelligence only of the place of his retreat. "Go stab the earl dead," was Canute's reply : the fatal command was obeyed. And now, from all that has been said, I think it must strike any thoughtful person that the reality of Canute's conversion was more than questionable : here we have another proof that his unscrupulous actions were continued nearly through his whole reign ; that his sins were such as no works of piety and mercy attributed to him could excuse in the very least degree. And we must place it rather to the influence of the clergy that he performed so many, than to the sincerity of his faith ; unless they were undertaken, as, alas, good deeds sometimes are, in the vain idea of compounding for the commission of crime.

We may close the reign with a few extracts from a letter which he addressed to Athelnoth, archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops of the English Church, and which will explain the object of his visit to Rome ; which event took place in the year 1031.

"I make known to you," he writes, "that I have

lately been to Rome, to pray for the pardon of my sins, and for my subjects. This I had long intended, and made a vow to that end, which the pressure of state affairs prevented me from fulfilling; but now I return humble thanks to God that it has been granted to me to kneel at the tomb of the blessed Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul; and to offer my prayers as well in many other places made sacred by the holiest associations." He then speaks of the Easter celebration at which he had been present, and the princes he met there, among whom the emperor Conrad held the chief place. "The emperor," he said, "had received him in the most honourable way, and given him many presents." He had obtained from all the assembled princes a permission to English travellers, whether merchants or on pilgrimage, to pass toll-free through their respective dominions: and he went on to state that he had also made a successful remonstrance with pope John against the large sums extorted, in the way of fees, from the English archbishops, when visiting Rome to obtain their palls; which abuse the pope readily promised to set to rights.

Then followed a great deal more, in the way of directions to the clergy, counsellors, and sheriffs, in the administration of their respective duties, annexed to which is the following remarkable passage:—"Be it known to you that I have vowed, as a suppliant, henceforth to justify, in all things, my whole life to God, and to rule the kingdoms and peoples subject to me justly and piously, to maintain equal justice among all; and if, through the intemperance of my youth, or through negligence, I have done aught hitherto contrary to what is just, I intend, with the aid of God, to amend all," &c.^r

There is a tone of sincerity in this letter, as there was (according to one historian,) an appearance of sincerity in his devotions, while engaged in this journey, yet it seems hardly humble enough for a penitent; the anecdote which has been given farther back, of his exclamation to his courtiers on the sea-beach, is more favourable to the idea of his conversion; added to the fact, that, from that moment, he refused steadily to wear his crown, hanging it up reverently upon a crucifix in his apartment.* He was certainly a great king, but on his character as a man we cannot venture to decide favourably: viewing his life, however, in its last lineaments, we may be allowed to express a hope that, by "turning from his wickedness," and doing what was "lawful and right" he may have saved "his soul alive." Would that there were less uncertainty in such a hope. Canute died at Shaftesbury on the 11th of Nov. 1035.†

He left three heirs, Sweyn and Harold, of doubtful origin,[‡] and Hardicanute, son to queen Emma of Normandy; and he had also a daughter by his second queen, called Gunhilda, married to the German king, Henry III.

* In the Church of Winchester, according to some historians.

† A verse in Ely Cathedral is ascribed to Canute, but not with any certainty. It is as follows:—

"Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely,
Dha Cnute ching ren dher by:
Rowedh cnites nær dhe land,
And hear we thes muneches sæng."

Which has been translated:

Ely's monks sang cheerfully,
When Cnute the king was passing by:
"Row to the shore, knights," said the king,
"And let us hear these churchmen sing."

See Lappenburg, p. 219, vol. ii. and Andrewes's History.

‡ Sons, or reputed sons, to Alfwyn, daughter of Alfhelm, earl of Northampton, and the noble lady Wulfrun. She is thought to have imposed these children on Canute as hers, being in reality childless.

LECTURE XXVI.

A.D. 1035—1045.

THE REIGN OF HAROLD "HAREFOOT."

It will be remembered that, by Canute's marriage settlement with his English wife, the children of that marriage were made to take precedence of the other heirs to the crown. Thus Hardicanute had the first claim in law, if not in justice, and yet it does not appear that he made any strong effort to establish this claim. Harold Harefoot, whose questionable parentage I mentioned in the last lecture, took advantage of his inactivity to ascend the throne, placing the half recovered country in the dilemma of submission or a civil war. The "witan" were immediately assembled at Oxford, where the heads of the nation began by opposing Harold, but ended by agreeing to his sovereignty over the northern counties ; and if, as has been said, Canute's will was in favour of Harold,^a and that, in this instrument, he awarded the kingdom of Denmark only to his youngest son, the arrangement is the less to be wondered at. The existence of such a will accounts also for the abrupt way in which Hardicanute threw up his claim, and retreated to Denmark, which, as he had a strong party in his favour in this country, seems at first

^a Sim. of Durham is the authority for the will, according to Rapin, but he doubts its existence altogether.

sight an act of folly or weakness. There was one individual, however, who stood firm in his opposition to Harold, Athelnoth the archbishop. He refused to consecrate, and his refusal was a serious obstacle to the stability of Harold's power, for a large proportion of the people were still attached to the Church, and he would not be looked upon as a king by them unless the solemn sanction of the anointing had been conferred upon him.

You may easily imagine the panic that followed the announcement that one who was a Dane in heart and principle held the reins of government ; it was like a death blow to peace and civilization. Past sufferings were still fresh in the minds of the English, and so terrified were some by their own forebodings, that they forsook their homes, and fled with their families to the marshy wildernesses round Croyland and Ely, where, by their number and the urgency of their needs, they so impoverished the hospitable monks in that neighbourhood, that, had not better times arisen, these communities must have been broken up or dispersed. It was common then for travellers and wanderers of all descriptions to go to the monasteries as we do to inns, for refreshment and shelter. There were few inns, then,^b and although there was doubtless much hospitality in private families, yet the uncertain state of the country, and the violence of party feeling, would place people on their guard against too ready an admittance of strangers into their dwellings. In the monasteries it was different, since their inmates were supposed to occupy

^b Mention is made of inns over which Danes took the supervision, so that they were not safe places to remain at, their landlords being entirely under their Danish masters.

a religious position, which separated them from the worldly factions going on without the walls. This position, as it was their only real defence, so it enabled them to receive and assist persons of all ranks, classes, and opinions. From the poor they expected no return but "the blessing of him that was ready to perish;" from the wealthy they generally had some equivalent for the assistance rendered; but the gift was not demanded, (by their rule of poverty they could not demand anything,) it was quite voluntary on the part of the persons entertained. You will see, then, what must have been the difficulties of the poor monks in times of public distress, when scarcely any of those who took refuge with them were able to make any return; and besides, it was not uncommon for ill-disposed and needy princes and nobles to seize and appropriate their lands, or to fine them in large sums of money on trifling pretexts.* On the other hand it is painful to be obliged to allow that this habit of receiving gifts had already, in some measure, changed the character of the monastic "poverty;" there were communities and individuals in them, very few it is to be hoped, but still there were a few, more ready to grasp at all they could get to increase the dignity and importance of their institutions, than to set an example of men who, in evangelical purity and simplicity, possessed as though they had not, and held what they had rather as a means to benefit others than to enrich themselves.

But you will naturally begin to enquire what became

* Sometimes they were obliged to give leases of the abbey lands to the powerful nobles in the neighbourhood, in return for their protection, thus diminishing their own means of life; which lands, in numerous instances, were detained by the unscrupulous lessees, and so lost to the Church.

of the queen Emma during Harold's struggle for ascendancy? Did she tamely submit to see her son's interests set aside? In the quaint language of the Saxon Chronicle it is merely said that she "sat within," a most touching mode of describing that state of anxious watching which, in periods of public peril, is generally a woman's lot. She was at Winchester, where she had resided with Canute, and in what was, nominally, her son Hardicanute's portion of the kingdom. But she was not suffered to remain unmolested, those rich things which she had accumulated around her in her husband's lifetime being demanded by Harold, and yielded up for the sake of peace; after which we are told that "she continued still to sit there within as long as she could."^d

Harold was essentially a Dane, rough in manners, wild and unmanageable in disposition, and a deep drinker when festivity was the order of the day. His favourite pursuit was hunting; his extraordinary swiftness of foot and activity of limbs in this exercise procuring for him that surname by which he has been designated. There is a master spirit in every age; that of the present and succeeding reign was the imperious earl Godwin, a man whose natural energy was great, his ambition boundless, and who stopped at nothing that came between him and the object he had in view; that object was power, and an alliance to royalty near enough to sanction him in its exercise. At Canute's death he warmly defended the cause of queen Emma, but there can be no doubt about the double part which he played afterwards, and that he meant to sell his influence to the highest bidder.

^d Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1035.

About this time a letter was written to recal the princes Edward and Alfred from Normandy, Hardicanute's prolonged absence in Denmark making a new opening for the heirs by the Saxon succession. Queen Emma is said to have written this letter, but some historians make it a stratagem of Godwin to draw the princes into Harold's power, with whom he was already negotiating terms of friendship. Since the letter was really written in queen Emma's name, and reached its destination, it matters little to us to know which version of the story is the correct one: it is certain that the two princes arrived shortly after in England. Edward's expedition proved fruitless, the Norman soldiers, whom he brought over with him, behaving so very badly in the neighbourhood where he disembarked, that he was compelled to return whence he came. Alfred succeeded in landing peaceably, and went first to Canterbury, where the archbishop gave him a joyful welcome, and the people thronged to see him. At this juncture he was met by earl Godwin, who dissembled his treacherous feelings, and greeted him with cordiality.

Little thought the unsuspecting Etheling what was in store for him, when the powerful and courteous noble welcomed him to his native shore. Entirely deceived by his professions, he submitted his whole plan to Godwin's approval, listened willingly to his suggestions as to the best mode of carrying it out, and agreed to accompany him to Guildford, where, upon his arrival, he allowed him to quarter his men, in detached bodies, in distant parts of the town, far away from their unhappy master. The diabolical scheme was permitted to be successful, and the attendants, who were first plied with

drink, and afterwards manacled, recovered their recollection only to be led to execution the next morning, when they were decimated in the manner of Elphege's townsmen, and the nine-tenths thus selected were tortured with a refined cruelty of which the details are too horrible to be repeated. The few survivors were either sold as slaves, or kept prisoners, exposed to the derision of the populace. A drearier fate awaited the hapless Alfred; dragged bound to Ely, they took out his eyes, injuring the brain by their brutal violence; he was then removed to the monastery hard by, where he lingered in great agony for a little while, it is not exactly known how long. The closing scene is pathetically described by an old writer, whose ideas I follow rather than the precise words in which they are embodied.*

They buried him,
It was his due,
Full worthily;
Within the aisle,
Where sunbeams smile,
And seraphim
Are gazing through;
The steeple nigh
They bid him lie:
Around, the quiet dead,
And overhead
The floating anthem's solemn peal;
Peace to his soul
Is in its roll.

Peace to the sorrows of the stricken breast,
"Grant him perpetual light, eternal rest."

* After that, him they buried,
As well was his due,
Full worthily,
As he worthy was;
At the west end,
The steeple well nigh,
In the south aisle:
His soul is with Christ.

Saxon Chronicle, year 1036.

This act of Godwin leaves an indelible stain upon his character, even if carried out, as he alleged afterwards, by Harold's commands ; and we must feel how little he would have cared to disobey Harold had it been his interest to do so. A key is found to his motives in the incidental mention of his having proposed to prince Alfred to marry his daughter Edith, which Alfred, who had an independent spirit, refused to do.^f There is nothing that tempts a man to such dark revenge as wounded pride, add to which, that earl Godwin made this alliance with his family the condition of obtaining his favour ; it was the pet scheme of his ambition. This is proved by his extorting from Harold a similar promise to be his son-in-law, and afterwards from Edward the Confessor.

The murder of her son was a terrible shock to the poor queen, yet it prepared her for her own disgrace, which speedily followed. She was driven out of the country "in the stormy winter, without any mercy."^g She took refuge at Bruges, at the court of the distinguished earl Baldwin, one of the greatest men of his age. It is to his honour that he received her courteously, and even provided for her necessities at his own cost.

The length of Hardicanute's absence from England, and the subversion of his claim, (for Harold was now king over the whole country,) seem to have given cause to the archbishop to reverse his first determination, and accordingly he consecrated Harold in due

^f See Collier, vol. i. p. 507.

^g "Algiva (Emma) formerly queen of the English, at the beginning of winter, without mercy was driven out of England. A ship was provided for her in Flanders, wherein she was transported, and she was there received with honour by the noble earl Baldwin. He most bountifully provided everything that was necessary for her, as became the character of so great a man." Quoted from Sim. Dunelm, in Hist. Collect. p. 363.

form. Athelnoth did not long survive this act, but died, after a blameless life, much respected. He appears to have merited the title of “good,^h” for he shewed courage in opposing the evil which surrounded him. That his opposition was ineffectual will hardly cause surprise ; it was not likely that the Church could control the violence of party interests. Her living principles doubtless still worked in many a faithful heart, but it was much if her authority were recognised as an element of government ; and, practically, it was held of small account, except so far as an opportunity of increasing the crown influence was afforded by the appointments to vacant bishoprics.

A rising on the part of the Welch prince, Griffith, against the English government, which caused the death of Edwin, (brother to the powerful Leofric, earl of Mercia,) Thurkell, Elfget, and other Saxons of rank, who were sent to quiet them, and fell in the fray, is the last event of Harold’s reign. “He could not run so fast,” it has been observed, “but that death quickly overtook him.” He lived without honour, and died (at Oxford) unlamented. The whole length of his reign was four years and sixteen weeks. He was buried at Westminster.

THE REIGN OF HARDICANUTE.

THE summer of 1039 brought Hardicanute to Bruges, on his way to England, with sixty ships. Rousing himself at last from the torpor in which he had re-

^h Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1038.

mained, and which arose, some say, from intemperate habits, and their companions, languor and disease, rather than from a natural want of energy, he prepared to assert his right to the English throne. His victory was a bloodless one, a Higher Power had decided it for him ; for, on Harold's unexpected demise, the unanimous voice of the English nation declared Hardicanute king, and a deputation, headed by Elfwerd, bishop of London, waited upon him at Bruges to announce the decision of the "witan." He therefore sailed triumphantly up the Thames, and was magnificently crowned, amidst the acclamations and rejoicings of the people. But this bright beginning of his reign was as unreal as the gleams that usher in a wintry day. He disappointed all the hopes that had been formed of him, and not only did "nothing royal" during his short reign, but what is recorded of him bears throughout the stamp of a mean and degraded mind, wholly given up to the indulgence of its own passions. Of this character was the vengeance taken by him on Harold's dead body, which was, by his orders, disinterred, and thrown twice into the Thames, being rescued from ignominy in each case by the resident Danes,^k who had it finally buried in the churchyard of S. Clement Danes, near Temple-bar.

Having vented his wrath on the senseless remains of a dead enemy, his attention was next turned to the punishment of a living offender ; and here he acted rightly in the first instance, for surely no one better deserved to be made an example of than earl Godwin. What then must have been the disgust of the people

ⁱ Saxon Chronicle. Rudborn says he did nothing good.

^k It was taken out of the water, in the first instance, by a fisherman, who carried it to the Danes.

when Hardicanute accepted a present from this man in lieu of justice? The crafty noble, dreading the result of his trial, had a ship built for the king, and fitted up in a style of great splendour. It had a gilt beak, its crew consisted of eighty warriors, with gilded helmets, carrying swords, axes, shields, and lances, inlaid with the same precious metal, and each of the eighty men had, on either arm, a gold bracelet, weighing sixteen ounces;¹ the weight alone of these would amount to two hundred and thirteen pounds of solid gold! When it was offered to Hardicanute he was like a child with a new toy. Godwin was forgiven, and carried his haughty brow as high as ever. Bishop Living, who had been accused of being Godwin's accomplice in the murder of Alfred, also made his peace with the king.

In the court little was thought of but good cheer. The number of meals served up daily was at this time increased to four, which, if we consider the heavy viands of that period, is a proof of great excess, and must have been thought so, or the fact would not have seemed worthy of being handed down to posterity. Meanwhile the people groaned under a system of the most tyrannical taxation, to maintain an overgrown and useless sea force. Unable to meet the cruel exaction, and tormented and ill-used by the Danes, who were allowed to lord it over the ancient inhabitants with the greatest impunity, discontents soon became general. At last the citizens of Worcester rebelled, and, rising upon Feader and Thurstan, two of the king's tax gatherers, put them to death; for which offence Hardicanute sent an army to punish them, under the

¹ William of Malmesbury. *De gestis reg.*

command of the earls Leofric of Mercia, Godwin of Wessex, Siward of Northumbria, Thor of the Middle Angles, and Roni, count of Huntingdon, thus treating them not only as rebels, but as enemies. The wretched inhabitants fled to an island called Beverege, in the Severn, where they remained crowded together like a flock of sheep, but their town was burned, and their lands subjected to a four days' pillage. I do not say they did not deserve punishment for rebellion, but the treatment they met seems more like revenge than a just retribution tempered with mercy.

Let us now speak of the only action of Hardicanute which can be mentioned with pleasure, his invitation to his half brother Edward to return to England and visit at his court. This summons was readily obeyed, and Hardicanute's whole treatment of his distinguished guest shewed an entire freedom from that paltry jealousy which had disgraced his predecessor Harold. Edward brought with him a numerous retinue of Normans, to whom, from long residence in their country, he was warmly attached. They proved a source of disquiet and annoyance to the English.

Osgod Clapa, a man of high rank, married his daughter, about this time, to the Dane Tovi "the Proud;" there was a great celebration, and the marriage feast was of the most sumptuous nature. The king graced it with his presence. Shall we not rather say that he disgraced it by his intemperance? But the mandate had gone forth which was to summon him, unprepared, into the presence of his Judge. In the midst of the revelry, and in the prime of his life, while in the act of raising the wine cup to his lips for another

long and copious draught, he suddenly became violently convulsed, fell to the ground and spoke no more.

Such was the end of a king universally hated, and whose misrule caused his name ever after to be held in abhorrence and the day of his death to be kept as a festival! ^m

THE REIGN OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

IN portraying the reign of Edward the Confessor, who succeeded Hardicanute A.D. 1043, I shall try rather to give you a vivid sketch of the state of the country than a dry historical narrative. Edward, if not the last of the Anglo-Saxon kings, was the last who could be called a king, and with him may be said to end an era the events of which can hardly be surpassed in interest or importance. The few years which follow in the wake of Hardicanute's brief sovereignty are scarcely less exciting than those through which we have gone before, although the nature of the feelings which they excite is widely different; for now we are called on to watch the dying struggles of a dynasty whose early glories, blended as they were with everything that is beautiful in faith, and noble in deed, led captive both the imagination and affections; until the very name of Saxon became a point round which holy thoughts might rally and high resolves gather strength. And if, as times grew worse, this reflection of the Anglo-Saxon

^m It was called Hogstide, or Hockstide. The derivation is variously given. Hardicanute would sometimes spend three days together in eating and drinking. Andrewes's History. Hochzeit is German for "wedding-day." High tide (time).

character was marred and disfigured, still there were always some bright exceptions : one by one illustrious men started into notice, shewing that the energies of the race were latent, not extinct ; the soil seemed ever to contain the seeds of future greatness. But a change was at hand throughout the whole kingdom, the sun of Anglo-Saxon independence was near its setting, and those who looked thoughtfully over the aspect of public affairs could see the shadows lengthen.

There might be a few who expected a different result from Edward's accession to the throne of his fathers, for he was undoubtedly possessed of strong religious principles, and these are a good foundation to go upon ; but never was there one less likely to tame the discordant elements which surrounded him. He lacked both energy in planning and decision in acting. It is common to call him half a monk, and to lay the blame of his failings on the Church. This is easily answered. Who loved and obeyed the Church like the royal Alfred ? Yet he made it his glory to study in everything the interests of the realm of which God had appointed him the oversight. The difficulties with which he had to contend were gigantic, but, in the strength of a living faith and unceasing devotions, he met them with gigantic measures, and the Divine Blessing attended all his labours. The real fact is that there was something essentially wanting in Edward ; his character was defective in vigour as well as his government.ⁿ There is no proof that his attachment to the

ⁿ William of Malmesbury terms him "a man, from the simplicity of his character, little calculated to govern," but devoted to God, and, in consequence, directed by him. But he afterwards admits that "there were some things which obscured the glory of his times."

Church was a cause or an aggravation of this deficiency. Had he been without religious principle, he would have added crimes to his weaknesses, and aggravated the miseries of the nation by wilful wrongs. It is pleasing to trace in him the marks of a sensitive conscience at the outset of his reign, in the expression of his fears that he might prove unequal to the cares of the state, and in his modest rejection of Godwin's proposal to raise him to the throne.^o But bishop Living seconded the earl in the task of persuasion, and between them his scruples were overcome.

Godwin had at length obtained all that he aimed at, for Edward agreed to his conditions, and even reluctantly promised to espouse his daughter Edith. He thus threw himself into that iron grasp which was gradually to close round his liberty of action.

There is at first sight an inconsistency in Edward's conduct, which is not afterwards explained, and which, in some measure, detracts from what I have just said of his conscientiousness. I think it right to place this difficulty before you. We know of his former voluntary efforts to obtain possession of the throne of England. How then is it that he now entreats permission to retire into a monastery, and only yields up his wish to pressure from without? Had he taken vows? It is certain that his inactive rule and childless marriage give a colour to this idea. Or was it only his experience of the troubled sea of political life that made him wish to shun its agitation and unrest? The murder of his brother would give him a painful view of the events

^o "He cast himself disheartened at the feet of Godwin, imploring him to facilitate his return to the quiet of a Norman cloister." Lappenburg, vol. i. p. 235.

with which he might be brought in contact, and the more so from his inability to control or even to dispense with the murderer. In truth not Edward, but Godwin reigned, although the former had occasionally the courage to withstand his aggressions. Over Wessex, Kent, and Sussex that proud earl held sway, in virtue of his own rank ; his eldest son, Harold, ruled East-Anglia, including Huntingdon, Cambridge, and Essex ; Gloucester, Hereford, Somerset and Berks were subject to his second son Sweyn ; and his daughter Edith bore the title of queen consort of England. His younger sons, too, were prominent actors in the public factions. To their power was opposed that of Leofric of Mercia, Siward of Northumbria, and other nobles ; all of them legislating like princes in their own territories, all of them pushing rival claims for pre-eminence in the public assemblies. Thus the very materials of which society was formed were combustibles, which a stray spark might ignite into a flame.

In the Church also a new element of wrangling had arisen, through jealousy of the Norman ecclesiastics, who had the royal ear. Such a government was almost in itself a faction, the overgrown authority of the great men, and the many disputes consequent upon it, sapping the strength of the constitution, and destroying that sense of public security which is necessary to the cultivation of peaceful arts and humanizing virtues.

Let us trace, however, the form which these evils took in the several events of this reign. Two grand ceremonials ushered it in, the coronation and the royal marriage. The first was performed by archbishop Eadsine, at Winchester, and mention is made of the

charge which he delivered to Edward on the occasion, as containing valuable advice for the regulation of his conduct. A short description of the young queen will not be without interest. She has been called the "Rose among the thorns," "and truly," says another writer, "she was a fair flower to spring from so rugged a stalk."^p Great gentleness, extensive learning, fervent piety, these were qualities one would hardly look for in earl Godwin's daughter, but she possessed them in an eminent degree; personal attractions of no ordinary kind were added to them. Yet, as an instrument to forward her father's ambitious views, she was probably useless, nor had she ever much influence with her husband, who is thought to have disliked her, and who lived apart from her. The people loved her, and pitied her loneliness.

Stranger still was Edward's conduct to his mother. It is reported of Emma that she had done what she could to oppose his succession to the crown, even to refusing him pecuniary assistance at a time when he much needed it. She had resided at Winchester all through Hardicanute's reign, exercising probably a kind of regal authority in the south, under the directing influence of bishop Stigand; this she may not have liked to relinquish, but whatever were her failings, they could hardly be an excuse for harsh and undutiful conduct in her son. Upon his accession he deprived her of all her property, and deposed Stigand from his see. It is difficult to account for this severity, unless his mind

^p "Whence the proverb:—

Sicut spina rosam, genuit Godwinus Editham.

"From prickly stock as springs a rose,
So Edith from earl Godwin grows."

Fuller's Church History, vol. i. p. 219. Quoted from Ingulphus. See also her praise in William of Malmesbury. *De gestis reg.*

was poisoned against his mother by some unjust calumny, which indeed appears subsequently to have been the case. Or his scruples may have been overruled by his counsellors in the matter, the earls Leofric, Godwin, and Siward, who accompanied him to Winchester to secure its performance, and most likely to share in the spoil.

It is equally difficult to give any satisfactory narrative of the sudden dispersion of the Danes in the beginning of this reign, which seems to have been more wholesale than their long settlement in the country would warrant us in believing possible, and which, if it did take place, must have arisen from the reaction in favour of the old Saxon race, rather than the royal permission to dispossess and destroy.^a There may be a closer connexion than can now be ascertained between this rising of the people against their enemies and the outlawry and banishment of Osgod Clapa, sheriff of Middlesex,^r as well as Gunhilda's banishment, with her two sons Henning and Thorkell, all which events come very near together, although they are separately given. The banishments were evidently acts of state policy, the exiled personages being both powerful and beloved, and, by

^a The following is the only plain statement of the event that I can find. I cannot vouch for its veracity. It occurs in Cressy's Church History. "As soon, therefore, as king Hardicanute was dead, without children, the English, incensed with their insufferable provocations, (the narrative of these had just been given), gathered an army, which they called Hownher, from the name of a certain person called Hown, who first gave them such counsel, and was their leader; and with that they fell upon the Danes, many of whom they killed, and drove all the rest shamefully out of England, whither they never afterwards returned." Rapin calls this dispersion of Danes "the most difficult passage in English history." Edward's mind may be known by the following anecdote:—When on a former occasion "his captains promised him victory, and that they would not leave one Dane alive;" "God forbid," quoth Edward, "that the kingdom should be recovered for me, one man, by the death of so many thousand men: it is better that I do lead a private and unbloody life than be a king by such butchery." Camden, quoting from Paulus Æmilius.

^r And high constable of England. He is supposed to have thwarted Edward's accession to the throne.

their position and birth, the very individuals round whom the Danes would naturally rally in the event of an outbreak. It should be remembered, too, that Edward was only king of England, not of Denmark, where Sweyn, Canute's nephew, reigned, who might at any time, by rousing the Danes, become a formidable opponent to the English king. And Sweyn, shortly after, did go so far as to lay claim to the crown, but he was induced to forego it by certain powerful arguments, one of which, it is alleged, was the promise, if he would be quiet, of nothing less than the succession, at Edward's death. Had Edward any right to make such a promise? But when afterwards Sweyn needed help from England against the Norwegians, it was denied him. In this instance the king listened to the advice of Leofric, earl of Mercia, in preference to that of earl Godwin, which must sorely have wounded the imperious nature of the latter noble.

It is interesting to trace the characters of these great men, for great they undoubtedly were, although their virtues were somewhat of a rough cast. Of Godwin's domestic habits little can be gleaned, but there are anecdotes still extant of his rivals, Leofric and Siward. A very curious legend connected with Leofric is familiar to most of us, but has hardly been regarded as an historical fact, which, however, in reality, it is. I will give it here, because it is highly illustrative of the period.

It relates to the old town of Coventry, which being under vassalage to Leofric, it seems that he was desirous to benefit the inhabitants as far as he could consistently with his own ideas of paramount rule.

The importance of the place may be guessed at when we hear of its possessing already a corporation, or body of burghers and civil magistrates, and an abbey Church. The religious foundation to which this Church belonged was small, and for females only ; one of Leofric's acts of munificence was the enrichment of the foundation by gifts of land and privileges, and the erection of a new monastery, on a much larger scale than the former building. Here he placed Benedictine monks, and the nuns were removed elsewhere.* He was urged to this generous deed by the persuasions of his wife Godiva, a good and beautiful woman, and much beloved by her husband's vassals. But there was a point beyond which her power of persuasion would not go. She had it at heart to induce him to free the people of Coventry from the burthen of a servile tenure which pressed heavily on their liberties.

\ What the service was which they were bound to render has not transpired,† but it must have been something very grievous. Godiva begged and entreated in vain. At last Leofric, worried by her importunity,‡ spoke to this effect : “ I will release the townspeople on one condition, that you will ride through the streets naked.” He probably said this to rid himself of a disagreeable subject. Godiva balanced the hard condition in her mind, and, impelled by a feeling of generosity which does her credit, although I do not feel sure that she had any right to act upon it, she resolved to take him at his

* The chart of the foundation of this monastery is still extant, wherein are named all the manors given by the said munificent count. And the count and his lady so adorned the Church with silver and gold that its magnificence was quite dazzling. Cressy.

† Fabian says it was a toll which they had to pay for all that passed in and out through the gate of the city.

‡ See Roger Wendover's account.

word. The inhabitants, full of gratitude to their benefactress, closed every window and door in the thoroughfare by which she had to pass, and her long hair saved her, in a measure, from the shame of exposure.*

Siward, of Northumbria, was a giant in stature, and bravery. Size, and strength are, like other commodities, valuable according to the demand for them; it was a great thing in those stormy days to possess them, especially when they were exercised in the defence of the oppressed. When Siward heard that his only son had fallen in battle against the Scots, he forgot the father in the warrior. "Tell me," he said, "where were his wounds, in the back or in the breast?" Hearing that they were properly situated, "I am right glad," he replied, "and wish no other death to me or mine." Feeling his own end approaching, he arose from his bed, and put on all his armour, and so died standing.†

Such were England's rulers! rude and unlettered in the extreme, and what we should call half-civilized; measuring those around them by the amount of their personal valour, rather than by their principles, and themselves by the success of their arms, instead of the justice of the cause in which they carried them.

* Leofric and Godiva also repaired the monasteries of Leon, (Lempster,) near Hereford, of Wenlock, of S. Vereburga, in Chester, of S. John, in Worcester, and of Evesham. The said countess likewise built the Church of Stow, under the promontory of Lincoln, and many more besides. Cressy.

† Camden's Remains.

LECTURE XXVII.

A.D. 1045—1053.

REIGN OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR CONTINUED

THE state of the Church in the early part of Edward's reign was most unsatisfactory ; the clergy shewed less and less of that earnestness and zeal for which they had hitherto been distinguished ; as easier and more prosperous circumstances surrounded them they gradually grew more negligent in their duties, a money-loving sordid spirit was undermining the love of souls in their hearts, and the desire to be poor and despised for Christ's sake seemed to have passed away. One deadly sin, the sin of simony, was the vile root from which these weeds grew. Livings and bishoprics had not often before this been bought and sold, and made subjects of private emolument, nor had pluralities been allowed ; now they were becoming very common, and fees were taken in some places for baptizing,* and for other privileges hitherto free to Christians of all degrees. But notwithstanding, the same remark may be made that was urged on a similar occasion elsewhere, that such abuses must not be looked upon as universal, or as uncondemned by the Church, since the very fact that bishops and priests so acting are held up to the odium of posterity, shews that the practice of the

* Life of S. Wulstan. "English Saints," p. 12.

Church was even yet comparatively pure.^b Stigand, the archbishop of Canterbury, Grimketyl, bishop of Helmham, and Living,^c bishop of Crediton, became all more or less notorious for acts of self-interest : Grimketyl purchased two dioceses with gold,^d but afterwards Stigand, scarcely a whit better in principle, got one back for himself, and also procured the bishopric of the East Angles for his brother.^e Nor would Stigand, when promoted to the metropolitan dignity, yield up the rich see of Winchester, until he was forced to appoint to it, but held that and Canterbury together.^f The conduct of Herman, another great pluralist, is also animadverted upon by the old historians, and a secular priest, called Edred, not long before this, went so far as to purchase the *reversion* of a bishopric, “with a great sum of money which he had scraped together.” We likewise hear of enormities of an opposite kind ; of an expensive lawsuit, sustained by the good abbot of S. Pega for the very site of his monastery, his cause being cast in the king’s court through Godwin’s influence ;

^b The state of things must have been worse on the Continent, for pope Leo IX., at the great council at Rheims, held in 1049, against these abuses, congratulated the English prelates on their comparative freedom from such practices, in testimony whereof he assigned them a seat of honour in all synods that might be convened at Rome, or elsewhere, by himself and his successors. The archbishop of Canterbury was to sit next below the pope on such occasions, and the abbot of S. Augustine’s next to the abbot of Monte Cassino. See Cressy’s Church History, p. 996.

^c Called in the Saxon Chronicle the “eloquent bishop :” he died soon after this.

^d Ingulphus.

^e Ibid.

^f Stigand’s character is thus described by one writer :—Then was openly spoken that he was not worthy a bishopric that could use the brag or pomp of the world, the use of voluptuousness, of gluttony and lechery, the shining array of clothing, the countenance of knights, and the gathering of horsemen, and think full little on the profit of souls.” Fabian’s Chronicle. “A prelate of notorious ambition.” William of Malmesbury. He “obtained by money the bishopric of Helmham for his brother Egelmar ; and to satisfy his own avarice by means of his money, ascended the sees of Canterbury and Winchester, and scarcely would allow the see of Selsey to be governed by a bishop of its own.” Roger Wendover.

and when he set himself patiently to build another monastery, he was also ejected from that, by a suit preferred against him by Fernot, lord of Bosworth, who, on the mere ground of the alteration in the site of the monastery, claimed the land for himself, as he said "there were now virtually no real monks of S. Pega, and his ancestors having granted the land only to the so-named monks, and they nominally not existing, it reverted to him again."

These two ejections became precedents for the seizure, on the part of the laity, of numerous other Church lands. King Edward had not the courage to resist these abuses. He acquiesced in the pluralities, and in the S. Pega case, he contented himself with receiving and feeding the poor deprived abbot and his eighteen monks, and instituting him as soon as possible to the next vacant monastery, which happened to be Croyland.^s This custom of instituting to monasteries by the king, although not of very recent introduction, was irregular, and it had been prohibited by the Roman see. It opened the door to much corruption, and many fraudulent self-interested transactions, besides forcing the heads of convents from their peaceful retirements into the poisonous vicinity of a court, where they were exposed to the temptation to avail themselves of bribery and private intrigue to gain the end they had in view. How few, alas ! could bear such a trial of their faith ! How sore it would seem to lose the desire of their hearts for the keeping back of a few gold pieces ! How fearful to win it without a blessing from above ! For even vows of self-renunciation, and great

^s Ingulphus.

integrity of purpose, if the blight of a worldly atmosphere sweep across their unsheltered growth, wither and fall like unripened fruit.

Nothing caused more annoyance in the country, or made king Edward more unpopular, than his partiality to the Norman clergy,^h who had accompanied him to England, and his appointing them to the vacant sees ; it was this, apparently, and the affectation among the higher classes, especially in the court circle, of foreign manners, and the newly introduced custom of speaking French, which fostered those discontents among the people which shortly after placed Godwin at the head of a powerful faction, so that Edward was more than ever dependent on his will. In the year 1044, the see of London falling vacant, Robert of Jumieges, the king's chaplain, had stepped into it. This was the first of the foreign promotions. Then Herman, a Fleming, and the same whom I mentioned before, was made bishop of Sherburn. He received also from the king the vacant bishopric of Ramsbury, and held the two together. Ulf, a Norman, got possession of Dorchester,ⁱ another Norman, William,^k succeeded to London when Robert was made archbishop of Canterbury, and Edward's kinsman, Radulf, obtained the rich abbey of Abingdon. Thus the most important posts in the Church fell into the hands of strangers. Such appointments excited great wrath in the earls Godwin, Leofric, Siward, and other Saxon nobles ; nor were they con-

^h Ingulphus.

ⁱ A most unworthy person, who would have been turned out of his see by the pope, but he paid a large sum of money to make his peace. He was afterwards driven out of it, "because he did nothing bishop-like therein." See Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1050. Also Henry Huntingdon.

^k William was nominated in the place of Spearafof, to whom the preferment of right belonged, as will be seen elsewhere.

fined to the Church only ; French knights had estates and castles granted to them in different parts of the kingdom, and Hugolin, the king's chamberlain, one of the principal officers at court, was a Norman.

I think I must not delay giving you the narrative of queen Emma's accusation, trial, and sentence, it will fit in here as well as any where else : it is difficult to ascertain the exact time when it took place.¹ Edward's undutiful conduct to his mother has already been commented on ; nothing can justify it. It is in strong contrast to his virtuous life, for, though weak and apathetic, all allow that he was in the main a pious and harmless prince, strict in his religious duties, gentle in his manners, and generally conscientious. But one wrong step paves the way for another, and having already allowed himself to treat his mother as a criminal, he was the more easily persuaded to credit tales to her further disadvantage. The man who stood forward to assert these calumnies against a weak and defenceless woman, was the king's favourite Norman monk, Robert of Jumieges, now bishop of London. If he believed them, it might be a point of conscience to have them investigated, but as the rest of the bishops and clergy were incredulous, and queen Emma's personal conduct had always been strictly regular, there is reason to fear, on the part of Robert, an interested motive in the whole transaction. It is said that he importuned the king from day to day to fix a time for the trial, and being at length successful, the queen was publicly accused, treated, by deprivation and imprisonment in the monastery of Wherwell, as a common criminal, and finally sentenced

¹ Perhaps about A.D. 1046—7.

to prove her innocence by the ordeal of fire. She was accused on three counts. 1st. That she had thwarted her son's succession. 2nd. That she had denied him assistance in his need. 3rd. That she had admitted bishop Alwyn to a higher degree of intimacy with her than was decorous or right. I ought to tell you that it has been doubted by many learned men that she ever underwent her sentence, but I think there is considerable evidence to prove that they are mistaken,^m so I shall not hesitate to give you the interesting narrative exactly as it has been handed down on the authority of Higden, Rudborn, and others.

The ordeal of walking barefoot and blindfold over red-hot ploughshares has been described at an earlier part of this history ; it was resorted to on the present occasion. We do not hear that queen Emma made any appeal against her sentence,ⁿ but rather quietly submitted to it, trusting her cause to the Friend of the helpless and oppressed. Nevertheless she sought for strength, to undergo the trial, in prayer, kneeling the whole of the previous night before the tomb of S. Swithun, in the Cathedral Church of Winchester ; a long period, according to our ideas, to take from her rest, when free-

^m Collier says that two historians alone, Higden and Rudborn, notice it, and that Matt. Westminster's silence on the subject, and that of others, looks suspicious. As further authorities, however, for the fact, I have seen Harpsfield, Brompton, Knighton, Dorset, and Camden quoted. Cressy says the truth of the story "cannot rationally be questioned," but allows that there are discrepancies in the chronology. But because bishop Alwin's death is placed against a wrong date, it does not follow that all the foregoing statement is incorrect. Cressy's account is taken from Harpsfield. There is also a very full account of the trial in Fabian's Chronicle, but the sources from which he derives it are not named.

ⁿ But his (Edward's) mother, more sorrowing the defaming of Alwyn than her own estate, wrote unto divers bishops, and besought them of justice, affirming that she was ready to abide all lawful and most sharpest trial. . . . This (the sentence) was of her granted, and the day of purgation assigned, at which day, the king and great part of his lords were present. But this Robert failed, were it for pity or otherwise. Fabian.

dom from bodily fatigue would have seemed the fittest preparation for what she had to perform. But queen Emma believed in the "communion of saints," and that more strength was to be obtained by prayer than in any other way, or at any rate strength of a better kind than mere animal energy. And she was not disappointed. She crossed the ploughshares unscathed, asking, after they were all passed, "O when shall I come to the place of my purgation?" All acknowledged that the hand of God was visible in this deliverance. Robert the bishop confessed himself shamed for the part he had taken in the trial, and entirely convinced of the queen's innocence, and bishop Alwyn, who had languished in prison ever since the trial had been pending, was restored to his see and position in the public estimation. He died shortly after. Queen Emma, full of gratitude to the Divine mercy, dedicated nine of her manors to the Church at Winchester; Alwyn gave the same number; the king dedicated three, one of which was the whole island of Portland with its revenues.*

It was soon after this that king Edward remembered a vow which he had made in the days of his foreign banishment; for he then resolved that, if ever he should succeed in regaining his own, he would undertake a journey of thankfulness to S. Peter's tomb at Rome. And now the right moment seemed come, for his country was quiet, and the crown might be considered secure on his head. But before he could execute this project a

* Camden is the authority for this statement. He says that this island continued to belong to the Church of Winchester until the reign of Edward I., when, by an exchange, it was transferred to the holding of the earls of Gloucester. And Cressy mentions that the names of the other manors are preserved in Rudborn, which is an additional confirmation of the reality of the trial.

council must be called, and, when summoned, the bishops and nobles present at it looked, one and all, with an unfavourable eye upon the king's scheme, so likely, as they thought, to tempt the enemies of the country to fresh inroads upon its peace. There can scarcely be a doubt that the judgment of the nobles was sound in a political point of view, and we may well imagine their fear of the foreign journey, but in a religious sense a different decision would seem to be the safest.^p As things were, however, it was resolved that the best mode of proceeding would be to send an embassy to the papal court, stating the difficulty. The embassy was entrusted to Alfred, bishop of Worcester, and Hereman, or Herman, bishop of Sherborne. They arrived at Rome on Easter eve, where they found the pope^q sitting in council : he gave permission to the king to alter his vow, allowing him to consider it fulfilled by the building and endowing of a monastery somewhere, in honour of the chief apostle, and giving to the poor of his realm all the expenses which he would have incurred in his journey had it taken place. This, I think, is one of the first instances that we meet with of the performance of a vow by changing its character ; such transfers became very common afterwards.

The above transaction and others in this reign may be thought unimportant, but they mark the progression from simplicity of faith to a system which belongs to

^p Deut. xxiii. 21 ; Prov. xx. 25 ; Psalm lxxvi. 11. There is, however, some little allowance of redemption in Lev. xxvii,

^q Leo IX. who ascended the papal chair A.D. 1046—7, being nominated by the emperor of Germany. Henry entered Italy with an army, to put an end to the disgraceful proceedings there, three persons all claiming to be popes at one time. He deposed Bennet and Sylvester, and Gregory resigned. His nomination of Leo was accepted, for he was universally acknowledged to be pontiff. See Andrewes's General Chronology, vol. i.

a more artificial state of society. Under Edward England was in an essentially transition state, especially in Church matters. She had been hitherto, owing to her insular position and internal convulsions, cut off from any extended continental connection ; and so, in some respects, she had remained the same, while the progress of refinement abroad, and the different mode of thinking which grows with it, were rapidly changing the manners and habits of the inhabitants of western Europe ; and at the same time bringing into decay those straightforward, sober ideas of right and wrong which give vigour and stability to the moral character. Thus, politeness was fast undermining sincerity, expediency treading on the heels of singleness of purpose. And yet much that was beautiful had also been introduced with these changes ; a more elaborate style of architecture, giving greater elevation to the ideal of Christian worship, a higher sense of what is due to the feelings of others, a keener relish for intellectual beauty, and a depreciation of such pleasures as spring merely from sensual gratifications. It was natural that Edward should wish to impart such tastes to his people, to educate them in what he had been trained to like and admire himself. But from what we glean of these days, it went sorely against the disposition of the Saxons to change their national customs, although, having given up those habits of self-denial which had marked their earlier religious profession, they could have had no reasonable grounds for opposing the progress of Norman refinement. It might almost, too, be called a choice of evils, to select between the intemperate ways and self-will of the rude Saxon earl, and the courtier-

like dissimulation and disguised selfishness of the Norman baron. Yet while this struggle was going forward in a bad spirit in most parts of the country, we must believe that there were many good men of both schools, and that good motives were often intermingled with their cavils and heart-burnings; to this history bears ample testimony. It is true that the good did not succeed in working together, each loving each for one Masters' sake; but it was not that they willingly clashed, they were so severed by the prejudices of education that they could not comprehend each other. As we go on, instances of this kind will come before us.

Among those nobles whose irreligious lawlessness made them a scourge to their country, Godwin's sons were pre-eminent; more particularly Tosty^r and Sweyn. Very nearly in the order of our present narrative may be placed the fearful crimes of the latter,* of which the following narrative has reached us. In one of those wild predatory rides across the country in which earl Godwin and his sons continually indulged themselves, when they acted quite as if they had a kingly right, and all whom they met were their vassals, Sweyn came to the neighbourhood of Leominster, where was a religious house. By way of shewing what he could dare to Griffin, prince of North Wales, who was with him, and in defiance of the laws of God and man, he sent and seized the unhappy abbess, whose virtue fell a sacrifice to his cruelty. This, however, was more than would be tamely borne, and Sweyn had to fly the kingdom. It is to be wondered at that the spirited Baldwin of Flanders, who had so many fine points in his character,

* The name of Tosty comes from Thorstein.

should give his countenance to the bad as well as the good, by receiving both in refuge at his court. It might not be convenient, perhaps, to inquire too much about the causes which brought powerful and distinguished foreigners there ; but so it was, that Sweyn remained with him during the winter in safety, much to Edward's annoyance. He and Osgod Clapa, whose outlawry has been mentioned before, amused themselves during their banishment by planning piratical excursions to the English coast. Previously to this, Leother and Irling, two Norwegian chiefs, had been annoying the people of Kent, by plundering and ravaging in the vicinity of Sandwich ; Sweyn, king of Denmark, had also threatened to invade England ; and at the same juncture the emperor of Germany, Henry III. sent to demand assistance from Edward against Baldwin, who had burned down one of the imperial palaces.* For all these causes it was deemed desirable to fit out a naval armament, of which Edward himself took the management.

While the king lay with his fleet at Sandwich, waiting to sail, the guilty Sweyn, tired of exile, determined on going and suing to him for pardon. In this attempt at reconciliation he looked for the sympathy of his brother Harold, and his kinsman count Beorn,† who were both with the king ; but they, having had his lands in possession since his outlawry, and not liking to restore them, persuaded the king, who had already half promised to forgive Sweyn, that it was impolitic and inexpedient to do so, for that he was quite unworthy of such a favour ; in consequence of which he only obtained a

* The palace of Nimeguen. Lappenburg.

† Son of Ulf, (earl) whom Canute caused to be killed : Ulf was brother to Githa, Sweyn's mother. See Roger Hoveden.

four day's safe conduct to go to his ships. Meanwhile, the feud between the emperor and Baldwin being made up, and no further danger expected from the north, Edward dismissed the crews of some of the vessels, and dispersed the fleet. But Godwin and Beorn, with forty-two of the ships, hoisted sail, and stood down the coast to Pevensey, and there remained for a time. It was then that the perfidious Sweyn, under pretence of again engaging count Beorn's interest with the king, but in reality meditating a dark revenge for his kinsman's unfriendly conduct, went from his own ship to earl Godwin's, where Beorn was, enticed him on shore, under colour of accompanying him to the king by land, and, when he had him there, three of his seamen bound him and carried him on board Sweyn's vessel; which immediately weighed anchor. They ran westward until they came to Dartmouth, where they put in, murdered their prisoner in cold blood, and Sweyn buried him in a Church "very deep."^u Upon hearing of this treachery six out of Sweyn's eight ships forsook him, but he, little caring, returned to Baldwin at Bruges, where, it is said, he "sat down all the winter with his full protection."^x

Scarcely had the people of England recovered the shock of this disaster when another took place, attended with greater loss of life and more serious consequences. The king had recently married his sister to the rich count Eustace of Boulogne, a man famous for the possession of an enormous pair of whiskers, but yet more from being the parent, but by another wife, of Godfrey de Bouillon, the leader of the crusades. Eustace,

^u Saxon Chronicle.

^x Ibid.

wishing to keep up a friendly relation at the court of his brother-in-law, was not long in proposing himself as a visitor to this country, an intention which he speedily followed up by landing at Dover with a very great retinue of Frank soldiers and serving men. These Franks were well equipped, and exceedingly conceited and domineering in their carriage to the inhabitants of the towns through which they passed. By this time the public opinion, which ever ran strongly against foreigners, almost amounted to a frenzy, excited as the people were to the utmost pitch of resentment by the intrusion everywhere of the king's favourite Norman followers, and the recent causeless refusal of archbishop Robert to institute the Saxon abbot Spearafoc to the see of London.⁷ As therefore the Frenchmen journeyed on, they were followed by many a secret malediction. But it was not until they were returning that the public feeling broke out openly, and this was partly the fault of count Eustace. Stopping to refresh at Canterbury, he heard, or fancied something, which made him draw up his men two miles short of Dover, and desire them to arm themselves. They entered the town in this hostile array, upon which the inhabitants with one accord refused them quarters, nor would they give them supplies of any kind. High words followed, when a

⁷ Lappenburg. "In this year king Edward appointed Robert of London archbishop of Canterbury, during Lent. And in the same Lent he went to Rome after his pall; and the king gave the bishopric of London to Sparhafoc, abbot of Abingdon; and the king gave the abbacy of Abingdon to bishop Radulf, his kinsman. Then came the archbishop from Rome one day before S. Peter's-mass-eve, and entered on his archiepiscopal see at Christ Church, on S. Peter's-mass-day, and soon after went to the king. Then came abbot Sparhafoc to him with the king's writ and seal, in order that he should consecrate him bishop of London. Then the archbishop refused, and said that the pope had forbidden it him. Then went the abbot to the archbishop again for that purpose, and there desired episcopal ordination; and the archbishop constantly refused him, and said that the pope had forbidden it him." Saxon Chronicle, Giles's translation. A.D. 1048.

soldier of Count Eustace's band drew his sword and put a householder, with whom he was disputing, to death ; which was the signal for a regular skirmish in which many on both sides were slain. Eustace, escaping with a few of his men, went in much wrath to the king, and loudly demanded redress, and this Edward, grieved at what had happened, and hearing only Eustace's version of the story, readily promised. Nothing could be more unfortunate, for the blame was clearly equally divided, but the king was inexorable, and earl Godwin was required to raise a force, and march to punish the people of Dover. In vain he represented the case more favourably, he had no choice but to proceed. Determined to maintain their cause, notwithstanding the king's command, for it was the cause of his own immediate vassals and dependants, his band of men was soon transformed into a rebel army, nor was he feebly supported, nobles and people flocked to him on all sides, and the country was on the verge of a civil war.

When the report of all that was going on was carried to the king, he was exceedingly incensed, and his conduct, in this instance, is in contrast to its usual passiveness : he convened a council forthwith,^a and required the insurgents to yield themselves up and appear to answer for their proceedings. This they refused, on the plea that their lives were not safe, unless hostages should be given for their security. At this time they were in such force that it was hardly thought prudent to attack them, so after a parley, when nothing was definitely resolved upon, the question of how to compel

^a Lappenburg. At Gloucester, "on S. Mary's mass day." Saxon Chron.

their submission remained unsettled. It happened that just before the council was called, Griffin, king of North Wales, had been laying waste the neighbourhood of Hereford. Godwin gave out that this was the cause of the immense force which he had collected, that is, he made it his excuse for taking arms against his king, but he was not believed. Edward either feared him too much to readmit him to favour, or he knew him too well. It appears, too, as if many of his enemies, seeing his disgrace impending, combined to oppose his restoration to favour,^a and the old Welsh history goes so far as to state that he and his son Harold were openly accused of treason by the archbishop, and the poor young queen of adultery ; so that full advantage was taken of his false position to work his ruin. And yet the king's advisers lost many months in maturing their design, for the second council did not meet until late in the autumn. Before this assembly Godwin, who continued under arms, was again summoned, and here his refusal to appear, unless guarded by a pledged escort, stood him in little stead. The king had firmness enough to pronounce sentence of banishment upon him, and his whole family were included in it ; five days was the stipulated leave granted to them to clear the country of their presence. It was a fearfully strong measure, but it took effect. In a few hours the haughty earl Godwin, his wife, and five sons, were hurrying to their castles to secure such riches as they could lay hands on,^b all the contumacious thanes who had joined them had sent in

^a Henry Huntingdon, b. vi.

^b "And Godwin and those who were with him went from Thorney to Bruges, to Baldwin's land, in one ship, with as much treasure as they might therein best bestow." Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1052.

their submission to king Edward, their retainers were throwing down their arms, and dispersing themselves like frightened sheep, the young queen, peremptorily dismissed by her consort because she was a daughter of the proscribed family, was on her way with a single attendant to the retirement of Wherwell monastery,^c and Leofric's son Algar, and count Otto, (who is supposed to have been a Norman,) were preparing, the one and the other, to take possession of the rich manors of the powerful Harold and the vacated earldoms of East-Anglia and Wessex.

Peace was thus restored, but it was obtained by silencing the people, not by satisfying them. Notwithstanding the tyrannical way in which the Godwin family had ever acted, they were held to be preferable to strangers and aliens. This feeling had been strengthened by their policy in fostering the popular dislike to the Normans, and standing forward themselves to represent the English party in the state. By this means many a heart and hand was won over to their side that had otherwise resisted their aggressions, and when, added to that, we take into consideration the immense possessions that were called theirs, and whose inhabitants were bound to their service by the usual feudal tenure, how can we wonder at their enormous power?

A curious circumstance occurred during the short interval of calm that succeeded to these disturbances; the enterprising duke William, of Normandy, paid a visit to the English court; Edward received him

^c "Into the abbey of Warwell, with one mayden, as saith Marianus." Fabian.

kindly.^d Childless himself, and uncertain who should follow after him, it is doubtful if he could have felt much jealousy of the duke's motive for crossing the water; but the nation must have viewed the proceeding with anxiety, for duke William came of a stock which had a double connexion with England, one of affinity through his near relationship to queen Emma, and one of formidable reminiscence, in that he was the direct descendant of the famous Rollo, once the scourge of her shores.* It was now very clear to all that while the Godwin family was in exile, the encroachments of the Normans were likely to increase rather than diminish; indeed, many new appointments, of which archbishop Robert was the moving spring, continued to be made, so that the spirit of disaffection grew. And yet, strange to say, the king was not the object of it; it was not upon him that the shafts of public opinion were broken. Amiable, constant in his devotions, benevolent to all in necessity, and scrupulously anxious to conciliate and assist wherever it lay in his power, the people loved and revered him; they could hardly do otherwise. It is true they did not rest upon his judgment; but for this very reason they abstained from blaming him, preferring to transfer the odium of all unpopular measures to his advisers.

I have not yet told you of the way in which his vow was performed. Powerful as Wessex has been seen to

^d Ingulphus says he shewed him his castles, and cities, and all that was worth seeing in his kingdom, and gave him many presents.

* A.D. 912. Rollo, first duke of Normandy.
 . . . 917. William, Long Sword, second duke, murdered 942.
 . . . 942. Richard I. third duke.
 . . . 995. Richard II. fourth duke, brother to Emma.
 . . . 1026. Richard III. fifth duke.
 . . . 1027. Robert, sixth duke, brother to Richard.
 . . . 1037. William I. seventh duke, afterwards king of England.

be as an Anglo-Saxon principality, you will be prepared to find a degree of importance attached to the position of its see. That its bishops held a high rank we have already had proof in the incidental mention of Sideman^f and Living. Living had now recently died, and his successor, Leofric, not deeming Crediton as important a town as Exeter, was desirous of transferring the episcopal residence to the latter place.^g Nor did this alone satisfy him. Why, I know not, but he was not content to have the services of the Cathedral, and the Churches depending on it, performed by members of the monastic institution, which had hitherto been connected with it; he would have, in preference, a set of secular canons, living by rule under him, instead of a wholly religious body. Probably there were advantages and disadvantages in both ways of managing the business; the monks under an abbot might deem themselves less accountable to their bishop than canons, or their influence in the parishes near might be more restricted, or there might be another reason for the change which has not transpired. But it is evident that Leofric knew the peculiar kind of danger so incident to a body of seculars, that of laxity of discipline, for his rules to prevent this were stringent. But what was to become of the dispossessed monks? Most opportunely for them, (for I suppose there was not an endowment for both parties,) came king Edward's new foundation, to which they were immediately attached and transferred.

London is a wide place now; Westminster seems

^f See reign of Edgar.

^g The see of Crediton, founded by Plegmond, archbishop of Canterbury, in Edward's reign, was, according to Cressy, moved to Taunton by one Putta, but afterwards again translated to Crediton.

but a section of its huge overgrown proportions ; such names as S. George-in-the-Fields, and Spring Gardens, speak forcibly of by-gone years ; they bring no idea of verdure to trained imaginations like ours. It is curious to think of Westminster as a spot once so covered with briars that it bore the name of Thorney, and where a recluse for many years lived a life of retired sanctity. This place was fixed upon for the noble structure, which, although many changes have passed over its fair proportions, is still connected with the memory of the royal founder, and where, under a mighty pile of colonnaded magnificence, his body yet sleeps.^h

In the earliest annals of our country it is recorded that king Lucius first set apart a piece of land here, to build a house of God,ⁱ and for a burial place for kings ; this Church was turned into a temple of Apollo by the Romans, destroyed by an earthquake in the time of Antoninus Pius,^k rebuilt by Sebert during the mission of the holy Augustine, reduced again to ruins by the Danes, restored once more by S. Dunstan. It had been consecrated from the first in honour of S. Peter, and so might well be looked upon as a singularly suitable site, and its pleasant situation on the river bank, and neighbourhood to the first city of England, were additional reasons for its selection. Here Edward de-

^h A description of the first building has reached us. "The chief aisle of the Church is roofed with lofty arches of square work, the joints answering one another ; but on both sides it is enclosed with a double arch of stones, firmly cemented and knit together. Moreover, the cross of the Church, (made to encompass the middle choir of the singers, and by its double supporter on each side to bear up the lofty top of the middle tower,) first rises singly with a low and strong arch, then mounts higher with several winding stairs, artificially contrived, and last of all with a single wall, reaches to the wooden roof, which is well covered with lead." Quoted by Camden from an ancient MS.

ⁱ Cressy.

^k Ibid.

terminated to rear a building which should exceed in beauty any that had hitherto been seen in England ; it was to be at once a standing evidence of the solemnity which he attached to the performance of his vow, and a model for similar erections elsewhere. In the sum which he devoted to this object he wished to exceed rather than fall short of the stipulated amount ; in the decorations, nothing should be spared that would add to their completeness.

He chose a place to memory dear,
 For many a long eventful year,
 All through the dim expanse of time,
 Since good king Lucius worshipped there,
 That spot the same sweet underchime
 Of breeze and ripple, chant and prayer,
 Had echoed to the midnight air.

But it is best to bring this lecture to a close.

LECTURE XXVIII.

A.D. 1053—1066.

REIGN OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR CONCLUDED.

COUNT Harold went with his brother Leofwin to Ireland, earl Godwin with his lady and younger sons to Flanders, the king sat in his vacant palace ;—could he feel free from forebodings ?

It would have been well for Edward if the banishment of the earl and his haughty family had removed them from power ; but they were not to be so easily put down. Certain it is that he could have felt no surprise when the news came in that a fleet, under Harold's command, was ravaging the coast. Already had much mischief been done, and before the royal navy, consisting of fifty ships, could be got fit for sea, more was perpetrated. Edward was never remarkable for energy, and at those protracted meetings of the "witan" the time for action was generally lost before the course of proceeding could be resolved upon ; it was a great evil that there was apparently no provision then for the speedy arrangement of such public matters as were urgent.

Harold and Leofwin, having harassed the western coast, proceeded to Devonshire, where thirty thanes^a

^a "They slew more than thirty good thanes, besides other people."
Saxon Chronicle.

and their followers were cut to pieces in an attempt to repel them. The next report was that earl Godwin himself was in the straits of Dover. By this time [some shew of opposition had been organized, but the orders given were so clumsily carried into effect by the naval commanders, earls Otto^b and Radulf, (both of them probably strangers to a seafaring life,) that Godwin escaped. Instead of pursuing him, or lying any longer in wait to entrap him, they quietly sailed away to London, leaving the coast unprotected.^c It was the old story of a fleet without a commander, a land force without a general, a campaign without an organized plan. The king, justly incensed with the two admirals, superseded them; this occasioned more delay, and, during the interval, Godwin and Harold met, and, having disembarked in their own barony of Kent, they proceeded some way inland, receiving supplies, congratulations, pledges, and promises of support from all; the people declaring that they "would live and die with them."^d Here is a convincing proof how completely Godwin had gained the populace, how, in the days of his prosperity, he had swayed them, and how feeble Edward's government was without him. It is true he had Leofric and Siward still, but they were warriors, not statesmen; he had his Normans, but they were too busy intriguing for their personal interests to care for the public welfare; he had his troops, but they

^b Or Otho. Radulf is called Ralph by some historians.

^c That there was mismanagement seems obvious from such sentences as the following:—"Then sent Edward after more help, but they came very late." . . . "King Edward caused fifty vessels to be fitted out; *they lay at Sandwich many weeks.*" Saxon Chronicle. "It was now resolved to put the royal fleet under abler commanders; but during the delay which attended the execution of this resolution, the seamen returned to their homes." Lappenburg.

^d Saxon Chronicle.

respected none of the orders given them. How should they, when there was neither a king to lead nor a sound head to direct them? Altogether it was a case of blundering from first to last, and Godwin must have secretly marvelled at their mismangement. As it was, he knew how to push his advantage at the right moment, and having assembled a large body of followers on land, and collected all his ships together in the mouth of the Thames, he waited for the flood-tide,* and suddenly appeared before the gates of London, his landsmen, in dense crowds, lining the banks of the river. This was the real crisis of Edward's liberty of action; he must conquer or yield. He was a long time undecided, indignation at Godwin's conduct overpowering more prudential considerations, but, as you will readily anticipate, the victory was on the side of the noble, not of the sovereign. Then, to save appearances, it was suddenly announced that it would be a disgraceful thing for Englishmen to attack each other, and a drama of forgiveness, with all its attendant ceremonies, was pompously acted, which involved the re-instatement of the queen, and the restoration of the offending earls to their broad lands, titles, seats at the king's table, and other privileges. This was an act of policy, not of clemency, and all accounts seem to agree that the king was compelled to it sorely against his will, and that his refusal to forgive Godwin was persisted in until the people openly espoused the earl's part, and threatened to surround the king; which made his advisers tremble

* "Count Godwin entered the Thames . . . as far as Southwark, from whence, partly by his agents, and partly by himself in presence, won most part of the Londoners to his side. And as soon as the tide was come in he sailed up the river, his land army coasting along." Cressy.

for the issue. In this dilemma bishop Stigand stepped forward and offered to arbitrate, and five men on either side were chosen to sit in judgment on the matter, earl Godwin protesting his innocence and his loyalty, and yet, in the very face of this outward submission, claiming the removal of the Norman favourites as a part of the treaty of reconciliation.^f

One cannot help feeling for Edward in the whole of the business : it was the sole occasion in which he had ventured to act with spirit, and his wishes were entirely frustrated. Yet justly as we must condemn the unprincipled earl Godwin, he was far better fitted to hold the reins of government than his royal master. Had not this become apparent through the constant recurrence, since his banishment, of unpopular appointments, and

^f According to one historian, (Brompton,) Edward on his side was equally firm in insisting on having the earl tried, in any case, for the murder of his brother Alfred. It was now evident that this was the secret thorn that had rankled in his breast all through the time of Godwin's hated presence in council and court, and he was determined to make another struggle to avert the recurrence of that evil. But his efforts fell to the ground before the powerful party of which the wily noble was the representative. Godwin, however, at the king's demand, willingly put himself upon his defence, and having given his son Wulnoth, and his grandson Hacon, as hostages for his appearance at the appointed place and time, he received, in the interim, a full, although a conditional, pardon. When all was ready, and a special commission for his trial had been called, he came boldly forward, and declared himself guiltless of the crime laid against him. A violent altercation followed in the court, and a variety of opinions were broached, both as to the amount of his guilt, and his accountableness to the assembly for it; but it is remarkable that none seem to have doubted the fact that he had instigated the murder of the prince, if indeed he had not shared it. At length Leofric stood up, and proposed that, earl Godwin being, next to the king, the first person in the realm, he should make the king a compensation for what he had suffered through his means, and that, in pursuance of this sentence, earl Godwin, and such of his sons as were present, and twelve of his compeers and kinsmen, (Leofric including himself and others there assembled in the number,) should carry to Edward their arms full of silver and gold, and, laying it at his feet, humbly supplicate for pardon. By this singular device, which must be looked upon as a compromise, the king was obliged to be satisfied. The substance of the above is taken from Mortimer's Hist. who quotes from Brompton. It is also partially borne out by the Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1052, which speaks of a second council *out* of London, where Godwin "bore forth his defence, and justified himself before king Edward, his lord, and before all people of the land, that he was guiltless of that which was laid against him," &c.

the permitted increase of Norman ascendancy, it is a question if he would have been allowed so complete a triumph. The dispersing of the Normans followed rapidly on the announcement of their sentence. Off they went most ignominiously, flying in all directions, some "north," some "west ;^s" it was an undignified proceeding from first to last, and few tears fell for those who had "instituted unjust law, and judged unjust judgments, and counselled ill counsel.^b" William, bishop of London, alone left a good name behind him, which shews that prejudice was not the only cause of the dislike these foreigners had excited. William was afterwards recalled, and replaced in his see.¹

I must not omit to tell you that during the time when all these events were passing one member of Godwin's family took no part in them. His "sin had found" the sinner "out," and Sweyn, conscience stricken and miserable, was a wanderer in a distant land. A pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, attended as it was with perils and privations of all kinds, was a thing of natural occurrence in days when people anxiously sought for ways of doing penance for their crimes. That open sin which had brought scandal on the Church should be openly atoned for in the face of the Church, seemed a self-evident truth ; and yet these pilgrimages were undertaken by some with motives of too mixed a character to lead to much good, either to themselves as individuals, or to the public in general. Nevertheless many a thoughtless sinner, if he reached the end of his journey alive, became a true penitent when gazing on the scenes of his Lord's sufferings and death ; these

^s Saxon Chron. A.D. 1052.

^b Ibid.

¹ Roger Wend., Rudborn, &c.

were no longer unrealities to him, received upon the evidence of others ; with a living faith came a living compunction, and he returned to his country an altered person. Sweyn never returned ; we know nothing more of his repentance, or indeed of himself, than that he travelled barefoot, fell sick from exposure to the cold, languished and died.*

We are now drawing very near to the close of the reign ; we need not dwell with a too exact minuteness upon it, because from the great revolution which made the Godwin influence again paramount, to the moment when the amiable king lay on his sick bed, awaiting his final summons to another world, there is a stagnation in public events.

In 1053 earl Godwin sunk down from the table, when he was dining with his royal master, in a fit, choked, it is said, by a morsel of bread. The particulars of this occurrence are given by more writers than one, but their correctness has been questioned. Still they rest on the same authority as other facts of the period, and there is, apparently, no real ground for rejecting them. They are as follows :—

Edward had been roused, by an accidental allusion, to reproach Godwin for his brother's death ; we have already seen how much that one painful circumstance dwelt upon the king's mind. "As God is true and righteous," exclaimed the wretched Godwin, "I am guiltless. May this bread that I am eating suffocate me, if ever your brother received harm through me.¹" The grey-haired sinner had pronounced his own judg-

* Roger Wendover. Lappenburg says Florence also. "Died by the waye of cold, that he had taken of goynge barefote." Fabian.

¹ Roger Wendover. See also Ingulphus.

ment. He was carried from the royal presence by his sons, Harold, Tosty, and Gyrth,^m but he never spoke afterwards. Cressy states, from Ælred of Rievaulx, that the king made the sign of the cross upon the bit of bread before Godwin swallowed it.

An expedition into Scotland, in 1054, with the view of avenging the murder of king Duncan by Macbeth, and re-instating Malcolm, prince of Cumberland and the son of the deceased monarch, on his father's throne, ended with a sharp engagement at Dunsinane. Siward commanded the English army, which consisted principally of cavalry, but it was accompanied by a naval armament, intended to coast along the shore to protect the land force. This campaign has been rendered familiar to all of us by the use made of it by our national bard, Shakespeare, who, in the scene which begins,

“The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,
His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff”—

has embellished, without materially altering the traditional facts. Siward died soon after his return from the north, where his son and nephew were both slain, as well as many Normans; the latter being among those who took refuge in Scotland at Godwin's restoration.

Among the deaths of other celebrated persons at this period, we may mention those of Osgod Clapa, earl Otto, and Leo IX.ⁿ

Leofric had a son called Algar, a spirited, high-

^m Roger Hoveden.

ⁿ “He took possession of the see on the 12th of February, 1049, under the name of Leo IX, being about forty-seven years old. He held it only five years, but they were filled with good works. He laboured strenuously in extirpating simony, and the incestuous marriages which many noblemen had presumed to contract.” Butler's Lives.

minced, young man.^o He was tried by a witenagemot, and condemned to exile, on what ground does not appear; it was probably a plot of Harold's, with whom he had had a difference not long before. Incensed at the injustice done to him, he went off to Ireland, returned with a fleet, and allying himself to that old enemy of the public peace, Griffin, king of North Wales, carried on, with his help, a barbarous warfare, by burning villages, and destroying corn, cattle, and all kinds of property in Herefordshire; and the meaning of this was to frighten the king into restoring Algar to his earldom.

Edward, who thought to quash the rebellion by an armed force under his favourite nephew Radulph, had the mortification to hear that all the Normans had galloped away as soon as attacked, and that the English who accompanied them, whom Radulph had mounted, although they were foot soldiers, not feeling quite at home in their new position, had shared the disgraceful panic; in consequence of which, Hereford had been sacked by the rebel princes, and its noble minster burned down. A second attempt followed, under Harold, to reduce Algar to submission, but this likewise failed, and Edward was fain to make up matters by forgiving him, in order to stop his depredations; so that, in the words of the old Chronicle, he was duly "inlawed," which adds another instance of weakness or mismanagement, or both, to the many laid to Edward's charge.

But the Welch were not yet quieted, and the next

^o "Algarus, the sone of Leofricus, to whom the kinge had given the earldome of Harolde, and ruled it discretly in tyme of his absence, and at his retourn, delyveryd it to hym agayne gladly and without grudge." *Fabian.*

year there is an entry in the Chronicle to this effect :—
A.D. 1056. “This year died Athelstan, the venerable bishop, . . . and Leofgar was appointed bishop ; he was the mass-priest of Harold the earl. He wore his knapsack during his priesthood until he was a bishop. He forsook his chrism and his rood, his ghostly weapons, and took to his spear and his sword after his bishophood, and so went to the field against Griffin, the Welch king, and there was he slain, and his priests with him, and Elnoth the sheriff, and many good men with them ; and the others fled away. This was eight days before Midsummer. It is difficult to tell the distress, and all the marching, and the camping, and the travail and destruction of men, and also of horses, which all the English army endured, until Leofric the earl came thither, and Harold the earl, and bishop Aldred, and made a reconciliation there between them ; so that Griffin swore oaths that he would be to king Edward a faithful and unbetraying under-king.”

It seems to have been about this period that Edward began to be seriously uneasy about the succession, and determined to send to Hungary for the son of Edward Ironside, also called Edward, and sometimes the “ Outlaw.” This prince readily obeyed the summons, arriving in England shortly afterwards. He was in all respects calculated to interest the English people, and win their regard, so that his coming was a joyful event. He had married early in life Agatha, niece to the emperor Henry III., who had borne him three children, a son, Edgar, surnamed Ætheling, and two daughters, Margaret and Christina, the former of whom, afterwards queen of England, has embalmed a page in

history with the memory of her sweet disposition and saintly graces. But how often do the designs of man fall to the ground before the purposes of God ! In the same year that had witnessed his arrival, the royal heir was consigned to a quiet resting-place in S. Paul's minster, and the succession was again involved in doubt. Some have thought that Edward was poisoned ; it is not impossible, but there is no evidence of it.

Bishop Aldred, mentioned a little while ago, was a remarkable man ; I will therefore give you a brief account of him. He was one of the moving spirits of his day, equally at home in Church or camp, in synod or in the saddle, in the pastoral office or the purveyance of troops. First we hear of him as consecrated to Worcester, and then sent by king Edward to attend a council called by the pope ; next he is with the people who had gathered to go out against the hostile fleet ; further on he is appointed to head the forces dispatched against count Harold, in the time of the Godwin faction ; then he travels to Cologne, where we are told he was received " with great reverence ;" this was on the king's business, and, I believe, closely connected with prince Edward's arrival in England ; in 1056 he reconciles the king to Algar and Griffin ; in 1058 he consecrates the minster at Gloucester, which he had himself raised to the glory of God and S. Peter. Before we can take breath in the narrative we read of his going to Jerusalem ; while in 1060 he is archbishop of York, and the following year again on his travels to Rome. He certainly was not a saint, for he was convicted of simony, and nearly lost his pall in consequence ; but he lived in days when saints were become very scarce,

and simoniacal transactions were so common that small blame was attached to them ;—this remark is not meant as a palliation of what no strictly holy man would ever be guilty of. Bishop Aldred seems to have been, on the whole, a spirited individual, with good dispositions, and to have kept every one awake who acted with him. One saint the reign certainly *did* produce, and Aldred knew how to appreciate him : I am alluding to S. Wulstan, his successor in the see of Worcester. It is related of this good man, that he had to receive Aldred, and two other Roman bishops, during the Lent fast. It was about the time of the promotion of the former prelate to the metropolitan dignity, and it must have cost S. Wulstan a struggle to run the risk of offending him ; nevertheless, although he provided most liberally for Aldred's entertainment, he persisted in keeping his own Lent rule strictly, nor would he be persuaded to relax in the least from its severity. The bishops, on the contrary, enjoyed the good cheer, but Wulstan's holiness made such an impression upon them, that they were unanimous in urging king Edward to bestow the vacant see of Worcester on one so worthy to fill it. So universal was his repute, that on one occasion the haughty and reckless earl Harold rode a great distance to confess to him.^p

An adventure of Harold's in Normandy forms the subject of the far-famed Bayeux tapestry,^q which was worked by Matilda, wife to duke William. Harold either went intentionally to the duke's court or he was cast away, and taken forcibly ; accounts differ on this

^p Lives of the English Saints. S. Wulstan. No. 5. See also Cressy's Church History. William of Malmesbury, &c.

^q Called "la toilette du duc Guillaume."

point.^r His alleged object was the release of the noble hostages, his brother Wulnoth and nephew Hacon, who were still in exile. Under whatever circumstances he made his way there, the fact is the same, that he was compelled to take a solemn oath by duke William, to the effect that he would secure the English throne to him at Edward's decease, and deliver up to his custody the castle of Dover and the other fortresses on his property. We are informed that he consented because he dared not refuse. The custom of making oaths more solemn by causing the party taking them to swear by, or standing over, some kind of sacred relic, still prevailed. It is told of duke William that on this occasion he had certain relics brought in a tub, covered with a pall or cloth ; they were so concealed that Harold might not know they were there, and fear to take the required pledge. You see that their presence, even unknown, was supposed to influence the future event. What a strange mixture is this of reverence for holy things, and daring impiety in the use of them ! Harold never meant to keep the oath he took, yet although very defective in character, through the utter absence of any fixed religious principle, he was by far the best of Godwin's sons, unless we except Gyrth, of whom I do not know much harm. Tosty was vindictive, overbearing, and cruel ; in the end he was even driven from his own earldom by the enraged inhabitants, who would bear his oppression no longer, but rose against him in a body.*

^r See that in Sprott's Chronicle.

* "He oppressed his people so bitterly that they rose in arms, slew his tax-gatherers, and having driven away the tyrant, placed earl Morcar, a popular nobleman, at their head. Harold was sent with an army to reduce them ; but as he found they had been wronged, he forgave their insurrection, and prevailed on Edward to confirm Morcar in the irregularly assumed earldom."

Tosty went so far in his lawlessness as to threaten the pope, on the occasion of a visit which he paid to Rome, a piece of daring in which, I suppose, many will be found to admire him ; among those who will not learn to distinguish between a sacred and high office, to which respect is due, and the unworthiness or unwarranted requirements of some who fill it. You may like to know perhaps what Tosty said to the pope.

When Aldred went to Rome for his pall, he and Tosty travelled very sociably together. I believe that Tosty had been selected by king Edward to be his ambassador to sue his holiness for a confirmation of the privileges granted to Westminster. The pope consented to what was required of him on this head, viz., that all coronations should be held at Westminster, and the regalia deposited there ; that there should be a body of regular Benedictine monks established there, subject only to the royal jurisdiction ; that the abbot should be independent of all episcopal supervision, dues, payments, or claims of service, and have a burying-place annexed to his monastery ; and there were some other minor provisions. But he would not give Aldred a pall, because, when that prelate was questioned, he could not clear himself from the charge of simony, and the pope also doubted his possessing the requisite qualifications for so high a post as that of archbishop. Aldred and Tosty left Rome as they came, together ; when they were only a short way from the city they

Andrewes's History. Tosty's revenge is too revolting to name. He was finally banished to Flanders, and became a pirate. See Henry of Huntingdon, Roger Hoveden, &c. See also the Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 1065. "All his earldom him unanimously forsook and outlawed, and all who with him lawlessness upheld, because he robbed God first, and all those bereaved over whom he had power of life and land. And they then took to themselves Morcar for earl ; and Tosty went then over the sea," &c.

fell in with a band of robbers,[†] who stripped them of everything ; upon which they resolved to return to the pope, and make a formal complaint of the treatment they had experienced. Then Tosty roundly told his holiness that “he had little opinion of a pontiff who, although he could tyrannise over poor foreigners who came to his court as suppliants, could not rid his territory of robbers and vagabonds ; and he added, that if he and the bishop got no redress, it would be easy for them, on their return to England, to persuade the king to stop the payment of Peter’s-pence !” When those who were with the pope heard this, they became so alarmed that they strongly urged him to make up the quarrel, arguing that it would be very bad policy to send two such distinguished foreigners home to their own country so much the worse, in every respect, for their journey to the papal states. Nicholas, therefore, revoked his sentence against Aldred, and gave him his pall, but conditioned that on his return he should resign his pluralities.

One more topic of public interest closes the reign. The Welsh continuing to rebel, Harold made a fresh and most spirited onset upon their provinces, conquering wherever he went. He was at first unable to compete with them, owing to their superior activity and knowledge of the ins and outs of the country, but he determined to be their match notwithstanding. To attain this object he reduced the diet of his own rude unwieldy Saxon soldiers, and leaving the cavalry behind in Herefordshire, with his now energetic troops he pur-

[†] It is a curious fact that the captain of this gang was the famous count Gerard, who had formerly exalted the anti-pope Benedict into the chair of S. Peter. See Cressy’s Church History, b. xxxv. c. 24.

sued the enemy indefatigably from point to point, not even allowing their mountain fastnesses to be a protection to them. After each successful conflict he set up a pillar with this inscription, "Here Harold conquered." At last, tired out and harrassed, Griffin fled, and afterwards his subjects, turning against him, put him to death, and sent his head as a trophy to Harold. Thus the war was terminated.

After this Edward only lived to attend the consecration of his new minster. He fell sick before the ceremony was concluded, and never rallied. In taking our final leave of him it seems necessary to speak more positively as to his character, and it first occurs to us to ask, "why he was called the Confessor?" The common reply, that he was canonized a hundred years after his death by pope Alexander III, because of his munificent gifts to the Church, is far from satisfactory. A better may be found in the assertion, which is made on the most respectable authority, that he was gifted with the power of healing the disease called, from this circumstance, the "king's evil." And yet, alone, such a power would hardly constitute a claim to sanctity; for, for long afterwards, it was believed to be hereditary in the kings of England and France.^u It is indeed very difficult to come to an impartial judgment on this subject, because

^u I extract from Collier the outline of the service in use on these occasions:—

"The first Gospel is exactly the same with that on Ascension day. At the touching of every infirm person these words are repeated, 'They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.'

"The second Gospel begins the first of S. John, and ends at these words—'Full of grace and truth.' At the putting of the angel (or gold) about their necks, are repeated—'That light was the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world.'

'Lord have mercy upon us.

'Christ have mercy upon us.

'Lord have mercy upon us.

Edward's weakness and incapacity to govern will always influence our impression of him more or less. Still we may admit that a thousand traits of his patience, meekness, and benevolence, and of his steadfast opposition to sin, and adherence to what was just and right, may have existed when he was canonized, which we have now no means of getting at, and many of the evidences of his piety which we *do* possess trench so far on the visionary and romantic, that even if we do not discard them wholly from belief, they are clearly unfit for the pages of history. The bull shews that some importance was certainly attached to the miracles said to have taken place at his tomb, as well as to the request of the English bishops. On the whole there is every reason to think that, as far as he had the power, he governed with prudence and moderation. This is much, and gives him a strong title to our esteem, nor should we forget what Collier so justly remarks, "that God prefers the heart to the head, piety to parts and capacity, and is much better pleased with the right use of the will

' Our Father, &c.

' Minister—O Lord save Thy servants,

' Answer—Which put their trust in Thee.

' Minister—Send unto them help from above,

' Answer—And evermore mightily defend them.

' Minister—Help us, O God, our Saviour,

' Answer—And, for the glory of Thy name, deliver us; be merciful unto us sinners for Thy name's sake.

' Minister—O Lord hear our prayer,

' Answer—And let our cry come unto Thee.

' The Collect.—Almighty God, the eternal health of all such as put their trust in Thee, hear us, we beseech Thee, on the behalf of these Thy servants, for whom we call for Thy merciful help; that they receiving health, may give thanks unto Thee in Thy Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

' The peace of God,' &c.

"As to the sign of the cross, made by the royal hands on the place infected, as Fuller speaks, it is a mistake; for there is no such ceremony used at the healing, the king only gently drawing both his hands over the sore at the reading of the first gospel. Besides if the sign of the cross had been used, it might have been abundantly justified by primitive practice." Collier vol. i. p. 532. See also Sparrow's Collection.

than the advantage of the understanding.*” It has been thought that Edward’s safety, in the midst of thickening dangers, was a special proof of the Divine favour.

Amongst his other good deeds a revision which he made of the laws was a real benefit to his people : some of the new enactments are worth notice. One, which went by the name of “*pax Dei*,” or God’s peace, was a provision to secure holy seasons from disturbance by brawls and arrests, now alas ! too common. By its regulations, all prosecutions ceased between Advent and the octave of Epiphany, between Septuagesima Sunday and the octave of Easter, and from the Ascension day to the octave of Whitsuntide. This release also extended to the Ember Weeks, Eves, Vigils, and Saturdays, from three in the afternoon, and the whole of every Festival. During these times the land was to be “one great sanctuary.” There were other laws, regulating the rights of sanctuary in the case of malefactors who should take refuge in Churches, settling titheable articles, (which, owing to the increased number of parish Churches, were not fairly awarded,) determining the manner of trial by ordeal, and who was liable to it, protecting Jews, claiming for the king treasure which should be found anywhere except in consecrated ground, when it was to go to the Church, &c. &c.

To the above particulars I would add that king Edward was strictly conscientious in his habits, and very plain in his dress and diet, except that he wore royal apparel on state occasions or when it was necessary to assert the dignity of the crown. Of his kindheartedness, too, I can give a very pleasing instance.

* Collier, vol. i. p. 530.

† Collier.

It chanced that Hugolin, the king's chamberlain, had gone out one day, leaving his master's strong box, where all the treasure was kept, wide open. It stood in the royal bed-chamber, and Edward was in bed, the curtains being drawn all round him. By and by a gentleman of the court entered, and perceiving that the chest was unlocked, he crept cautiously up to it, and being, as he imagined unperceived, he seized a handful of gold, and retired. Flushed by success, he walked in again for a second, little aware that the king was watching him all the time ; the second handful being also secured, he had the audacity to take a third, when the king gently told him that he had " better make haste, for if Hugolin were to catch him, he would not only have to refund, but chance to find his neck in a halter." When Hugolin *did* return he was much grieved at discovering the robbery ; " Let it pass," said the king, " the poor man has more need of it than we have.²"

With this anecdote of the good Confessor we will bid him farewell, only lingering for a few moments round his death-bed. It was a solemn scene, that death-bed ! The king was speechless for two days, and his mind wandered. Were these the wanderings of delirium ? the sick wayward fancies of reason gone astray ? They seemed rather the reflections of one on whom a new and spiritual faculty had dawned ; of a mind half in the past, half in the future, and only disengaged from the present. When the king's speech returned to him, it was given that he might utter a prediction, a deep and solemn warning against the unbridled licentiousness and degrading vices that enslaved a people

² Camden's Remains.

still dear to him, although he was passing away from them. He told those who stood by him that, during that speechless interval, two whom he had formerly known and loved, and who had long since died, had appeared before him; he had seen and conversed with them. They declared themselves commissioned to tell him the fate of his country; it had been "delivered up to the evil one for a year and a day!" Sorely troubled at this intelligence, the king had prayed to be allowed to warn them. "It will be useless," replied his mysterious visitors; "neither will they repent, neither will God have mercy on them!" And there was an allusion to a green tree, whose boughs, being severed and removed three furlongs off, should again re-unite.^a

I do not pretend to explain this vision,^b still it ought, at least, to have awed the bystanders; but archbishop Stigand laughed,—"The old man dotes," was his thoughtless and irreverent exclamation. The warning, however, was given, and now nothing more disturbed the peace of the departing spirit. "If you loved me," said the king to his tearful attendants, "you would not sorrow, you would rejoice, because I enter into eternal joy; not through any merit of my own, but through free and undeserved mercy!"^c King Edward died on the Feast of the Epiphany, 1066.

^a William of Malmesbury.

^b Had it a fulfilment in the re-union of the Saxon with the Norman line when Henry I, *the third in descent* from the breaking off of the old branch, married Matilda, daughter of S. Margaret of Scotland?

^c Camden, quoting from Ælred of Rievaulx.

LECTURE XXIX.

A.D. 1066.

REIGN OF HAROLD II.

HAROLD's brief sovereignty was like a troubled dream. It is said that the dying king nominated him to succeed. He could hardly have made a better choice, since Harold had shewn energy, resolution, and good judgment, in all the later actions by which he had been signalized. He certainly had a fine natural character, nor was Edward unlikely to fix upon him for his heir. As far as we know, he had never consented to the transfer of the kingdom to duke William,^a for the story of his having promised him the succession when a young man in Normandy, is scarcely worth notice, more especially as he is reported to have been greatly grieved at hearing of Harold's oath over the relics.^b Of late, too, Harold had placed him under deep obligation by his spirited conduct in Wales and the north. Less im-

^a There does not seem to be any certainty as to the exact nature of king Edward's wishes. It is even asserted that he gave the kingdom by will to the duke of Normandy, but this appears to me to be inconsistent both with facts going before and following. The only thing that looks at all like a genuine claim on the duke's side lies in the kindness of his reception on the occasion of his visit to the English court, but if the succession had been promised him then, would he not have urged the circumstance afterwards? which we know he did not. The speech attributed to Edward on his death-bed in Wace's *Chronicle of the Conquest*, "Let the English make either the duke or Harold king, as they please, I consent," is within the bounds of probability, because it is of a piece with the indecision of his character; it is also noticed by Henry de Silegrave; and William of Malmesbury speaks of Edward as "concealing his better judgment, through the tenderness of his disposition."

^b Roger Hoveden. Also Hollinshed, quoting from Polydore Virgil.

probable would the mention of young Edward the Etheling have been, because he was undoubtedly the true and natural heir; but there is every reason to suppose that he was considered by his uncle to be quite incapable of governing a country so torn by inward faction. It has been called a piece of Harold's policy to cause a witenagemot to be summoned as soon as the breath had left the royal body. At this assembly some of the nobles feebly pressed the claim of the Etheling, but their voices were soon overpowered, and the city of London rang with acclamations in favour of Harold. A curious fact is stated in connexion with his coronation; Stigand was thought unfit to consecrate, because he had not obtained his pall. It is not necessary to enquire into the reason of this. We know that Stigand was a man of unholy character; whether he could be an archbishop, too, in Robert's lifetime, is questionable, for Robert had run away, he had not died,^c nor had he been deposed; for one of these reasons, Stigand had no pall, and so at that period was not a full archbishop according to some. Others took no account of the deficiency, through which his consecrations were rather irregular than invalid.^d Harold was crowned by

^c Cressy says "he *was* dead at this time." He is alluding to the statement of Robert being sent to Normandy, to promise the succession to duke William, which he says could not be, as "Robert was dead a good while before." But other writers speak of him as being still alive when Harold came to the throne.

^d We are told that S. Wulstan was consecrated to Worcester by bishop Aldred, but made his canonical profession to Stigand. Before Stigand's death his primacy was still further questioned, at a council held in 1070, by the permission of pope Alexander II, William I being present. At this council he was pronounced degraded. 1st. Because he had unjustly held the bishopric of Worcester, with the metropolitan dignity at the same time. 2nd. Because he not only assumed it, the former archbishop, Robert, being still living, but he also presumed to use Robert's pall in celebrating Mass. 3rd. Because he afterwards obtained his own pall from the irregularly elected pope Benedict X, (whom the Roman Church excommunicated,) by invading the apostolic see with bribes. See the account in Radulph de Diceto.

Aldred, archbishop of York ;^e at the same time prince Edward was endowed with the earldom of Oxford, as a provision suitable to his rank and near alliance to royalty. The few months elapsing immediately after these events were not unproductive of interest ; they were marked by two points in Harold's character, his utter contempt of a formal claim made by duke William to the English throne, and his wise and active administration of the affairs of the state.^f I shall not say much about his perjury ; all who know his position will pity him, many would refrain from blaming him, but this is going too far ; it is an awful thing to violate an oath, whatever may be the circumstances under which it has been taken ; a blessing seldom, if ever, follows. Harold, it is true, had been sorely aggrieved, the pledge had rather been extorted than given ; one main condition of that pledge, the hand of the young Adeliza, for reasons which are not very clear to us, had never been ratified. There is an account of her having been married to the king of Galicia,^g much against her own feelings, which had become strongly attached to the English king. She may have seen his gallant bearing when it was the admiration of the Norman knights in Brittany,^h or her prepossession in his favour may have been nothing but the dream of an excited imagination ; in any case, he had been the leading idea of her existence, her whole future, and when the dream was dispelled, we are told that the chord of that existence snapped, and she died. I wish I could find out when this event took place, and

^e Ingulphus.

^f Hollinshed, quoting from Sim. Dunelm.

^g See the note in Wace's Chronicle, p. 83.

^h Cressy. Hollinshed, vol. i. p. 752, &c.

whether Harold's bad faith, or her father's, was the cause of it, because it would help us to a better judgment of the conduct of both. It seems tolerably certain that Harold had married Edith, daughter to Leofric's son Algar, and widow of Griffith of Wales, his fallen enemy, soon after hearing of the decease of that monarch. Rapin gives 1062 as the date of the Norman adventure, but it cannot be confidently ascertained: the marriage with Edith must have taken place in the following year.¹ This does not look well for Harold.

Duke William was a man of strong passions, and when he heard that Harold had mounted the English throne without any regard to his oath or promises, he chafed and writhed like a wounded tiger. But strong spirits like his had a check in such days in the difficulty of managing their nobles and adherents; those who were ready to serve under them for the sake of what they called honour and glory, or the hope of spoil, were too much like themselves to bear being thwarted beyond a certain limit, and too wilful to yield obedience against their judgment. Duke William might chafe, he was powerless to act unless his barons seconded him. Society was indeed in a fearful state in Normandy, as well as in England, and the "lusts of the flesh and the pride

¹ Griffith was slain, according to the Saxon Chron., A.D. 1063; according to Ingulphus, 1065. According to Wace the duke represents to the pope, among other reasons for the expedition to England, how Harold "*would neither take his daughter, nor render him up the kingdom which Edward had given him,*" &c. See also Harold's rejection of her in Robert of Gloucester's Chron. And Hollinshed. Harold's answer is thus given in Radulph de Diceto.—"The kingdom, which was not at that time mine, by what right could I either promise or give it? If he insists upon his daughter, whom he asserts I ought to marry, he must know that I ought not to bring a woman that is a foreigner and set her over the kingdom of England, without consulting the princes, nor can I do it without a grand injury." Quoted in Hist. Collections. It appears from this writer that it was Harold's sister, who had been promised to one of William's Norman lords, who was dead at this time, not Adeliza.

of life^k” influenced men more than either their religion or their affections, and bad passions ran riot in their veins. What do you think of a law of this period prohibiting duels from Wednesday to Monday, out of respect to our Saviour's sufferings?¹ It shews that moral feeling was so degraded, that the Church thought even a temporary check upon men's passions better than none. No one dared to speak to duke William while his moody fit was upon him; they left him alone to fasten and unfasten his cloak,^m which seemed at that moment to be the only employment that he cared about, and I suppose it was fortunate that the clasps were strong, or they would have stood little chance with such handling. He was in his park at Rouen when the news came, on the point of starting for the chase, but instead of mounting his horse he walked away. He got into a boat alone, and crossed the Seine to his palace, and there, throwing himself down in the hall, he covered his face with both his hands, and remained an extraordinary length of time without speaking. At last his seneschalⁿ ventured to enquire into the cause of his grief, and to suggest an embassy to Harold as the most formal way of commencing the establishment of his claim. The embassy sailed shortly after. Harold's reply to duke William's message was to this effect:—

“That as the dying king had appointed him to reign, and the ‘witan’ of the nation had crowned him, he

^k 1 John ii. 16.

¹ Treve du Seigneur, established in France, A.D. 1041. See Andrewes's History. Edward the Confessor's “pax Dei” must have been a similar enactment: it was indeed a blessed thing to get the peace kept then, if but for a few days.

^m Wace's Chron. p. 95.

ⁿ The first office of the crown, called in England Lord High Steward. The office is of great antiquity, and probably dates in France from the time of Charlemagne.

could only conform to their wishes; the choice had been taken out of his hands; it was not for him to dispute their decision; that as to his vow, it was a rash thing, into which he had been forced, and so it was not binding:° that the death of the duke's daughter, since it had prevented the completion of one main part of the agreement, fairly nullified the rest." And Harold added insult and defiance to his refusal to entertain William's claim, by ordering every Norman baron who had been domesticated in England during the Confessor's reign, to leave the country.ª

I must here tell you a few of the names of the great Norman barons of this period, for they are all distinguished in history, and are the ancestors of many of our present English families. The seneschal that we were speaking of just now, was William Fitz-osbern, of Breteuil, a descendant of Richard I. duke of Normandy, and of William Long-sword. Then came Robert, count of Eu, Walter Giffard, lord of Longueville, Odo, bishop of Bayeux, Roger of Mortain, and Roger Vielle, lord of Beaumont le Roger; the last three were half-brothers to the duke, and, with the rest, composed his council. The Malets, Turbervilles, Baskervilles, Mohuns, Lacys, Warrens, Granvilles, S. Johns, S. Maurs, and numerous others, also trace their descent to a like origin.¹ We will leave the first-mentioned of these Norman lords debating the feasibility of an attack upon England, and return to king Harold.

° See Roger of Wendover's Chronicle: but no two statements are exactly alike.

ª It is said that he sent duke William's messengers back with their horses mutilated.

¹ See the roll of the Norman lords in Wace's Chron., the names of the twelve knights who settled in Wales, in Sir John Prise's History, &c.

It was not long after he had dismissed duke William's ambassadors that he found cause of anxiety in a very different quarter, though in one towards which he had no unfriendly dispositions. His brother Tosty, burning to resent Harold's former interference in his earldom, which, during king Edward's lifetime he had been powerless to do, now determined to seat himself, if possible, on the English throne; if he could not get all the country he would try for a part; if he could not succeed for himself he would help duke William;^r or if not duke William the Danish king; for the descendants of Canute were always ready to assert a right to the English crown; in any case he would annoy Harold. We need not touch minutely on the minor events connected with his several attempts to carry out his vindictive scheme; he certainly did not lose much time between them; but the closing engagement is well worth a description. His first aggressive act must have been done by deputy; it was a rising in the north, which Harold and S. Wulstan soon quieted, rather by persuasion than violence.* The following April, Tosty was cruising off the Isle of Wight with a fleet; this was to secure money and men, in which he succeeded, impressing numbers of sailors on board his ships, and levying forced contributions all along the coast. He sailed next to Sandwich, but Harold, who had not been asleep, was now ready with an army to defend his kingdom from such piratical attacks. Hearing of its approach, however, was enough for Tosty, for he knew that he was not yet his brother's match, and put out to

^r Rapin says he went to duke William to concert measures.

* William of Malmesbury, in the life of Wulstan, Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 253.

sea. Most unfortunately the king was obliged to disband his army at this time, because he had no means to provision them, which might have led to very serious consequences had the Norman duke's preparations been complete, or had Tosty known how to take advantage of his dilemma. He made but one more attempt on the coast, and this was in the vicinity of the Isle of Thanet, where he was nobly repulsed by the earls Morcar and Edwin, his successors in the earldom of Northumbria ; when finding that a better arranged plan was necessary, if he would gain anything by his invasions, he left with his few remaining ships, and took refuge in Scotland, in the court of king Malcolm, remaining quiet the whole of the summer. By September his plans were again ripe for execution, and setting sail with all the ships he could collect, he was joined by Harold Hardrada,[†] king of Norway, with three hundred more, by Paul and Erling, earls of the Orkneys, and many Scotch and Irish adventurers. In the company of these he made for the English shores, and, landing at Scarborough, commenced hostilities without delay, burning down the town, and committing other depredations.

It was as much as Harold could effect to send off the earls Morcar and Edwin with such troops as could be speedily got together ; which being done, he made rapid preparations to support them with a more considerable army. In spite of his exertions, however, he arrived too late ; a battle had been fought at Fulford, near the Ouse, its result most disastrous to the Saxons : Morcar

[†] Son of the great Sigurd, the Dane chieftain mentioned in Lecture xxiii. note c.

and Edwin had been thoroughly routed, of the neighbouring clergy, who had come forward with their retainers to help the royal force, one hundred had fallen, and the field was covered with the wounded and dying. As for Tosty and the Norwegian king, they were so elated with their victory that they had already begun to act as conquerors, making all sorts of promises to the people, on condition that they would serve them, pompously receiving hostages, and demanding supplies. After this fashion they had proceeded inland as far as Stamford bridge, when Harold's unexpected appearance at the head of his army brought them to a stand. At first both parties took advantage of the pause to survey each other, Tosty, we are told, pleading earnestly with his Norwegians that they should not risk an engagement too soon, when so many of their fighting men were absent with the fleet; Harold, on the other hand, was occupied in ascertaining the exact state of the rebel camp. While he employed himself in gazing in that direction, he espied a most remarkable man mounted on a jet black horse, who rode to and fro before the embattled line; across his breast a blue scarf was folded,^a and his gilded helmet glittered in the sunbeam. Harold's quick eye recognized at once in this horseman

^a Badges and coloured mantles were worn by the leaders of an army, as well as by the different knights and earls, in order that their followers might know how to distinguish them in the battle; this was highly necessary where there was little regular discipline, lest the companies should become scattered, and get into confusion. Hence arose the custom of bearing devices on shields, carrying standards, &c. which led eventually, but at a much later period, to heraldic honours and coats of arms. In Wace's Chron. where he is describing the exploits of duke William in taming his unruly barons, the following sentence occurs:—"Then the troops were to be seen moving with their captains, and there was no rich man or baron there who had not by his side his gonfanon, (standard) or other enseigne, round which his men might rally; and cognizances, or tokens, and shields painted in various guises."

the fine form of the Norwegian king. "By my faith, a stately foe!" was his exclamation. Another second and the black steed rolled in the dust, unseating his rider in his fall. "Ha," rejoined Harold, "do you see that his luck has forsaken him?" It was then a time of omens, and many a word uttered carelessly influenced the fate of the day; what was said was believed by the soldiers, whose spirits rose or fell accordingly, and who does not know how much of the success of an undertaking may depend on the state of mind of those who are engaged in it? Tosty's remonstrances proved vain; Harold Hardrada, the son of the great Sigurd, and a true scion of the Danish stock, had too much of daring in his composition to be easily turned from a purpose which he had once formed, and he foresaw, and perhaps rightly, that procrastination in the respective position of the two armies could lead to nothing but defeat; he therefore determined to risk all, and commenced preparations for the battle forthwith. These were very skilfully made. A group was first formed to surround the prized standard, which was called Landryda, or the "desolation of lands." The whole of the infantry took their station a little way off, in a hollow circle, with their shields placed before them, edge to edge, like a breastwork, and their spears driven into the earth in advance of these, to break the charge of the English horse. Moveable bodies of archers were planted here and there, as circumstances seemed to require, ready to guard the unprotected points.

At this juncture a movement was visible in the English camp, from whence twenty powerful chargers were seen to advance steadily onwards, like a rolling

wave, colour, form, every part concealed by the massive iron casing in which they were enclosed ;^{*} they were mounted by twenty warriors, equally matched in size, equally hidden in jointed armour ; their visors were down, and their lances in rest. There was a breathless pause as they drew near the Norwegian line. Where is your leader, demanded the first horseman ? " I am he," replied Tosty, stepping forward to answer the question. " Know then," returned the disguised king, for he was the spokesman, " that Harold offers thee all Northumbria. He has no will to fight with a brother, and would buy peace even at the sacrifice of a third of his kingdom." " This is well," answered Tosty, " but what is to be given to the northern king who has left his home, and perilled life and estate in his friend's service ?" " Seven feet of English earth and as much more as his height requires," was the spirited reply of Harold. " Return to Harold, then, and tell him to prepare for the fight ; it shall never be said of Tosty by the Norwegians that he allured the son of Sigurd into a strange land and afterwards broke faith with him."

The charge of cavalry, which followed closely upon the retreat of the twenty horsemen to the English camp, was the signal of the attack ; it was repulsed with spirit by the Norwegians. Again and again the horse

^{*} Taylor says that it cannot be proved that horses were so defended in war at that early period, but I am inclined to think that as chain armour for the body had now been in use for many years, both among Saxons and Danes, it is not at all unlikely that it should have occurred to them to extend the same protection to their horses. Roger Hoveden mentions the Norman horses as covered with iron in the reign of Richard I. which was not so very long after, and it was Wace's description of Fitz-osbern's horse, which he says was "all coated with iron," that gave rise to Taylor's remark. See also an engraving in Strutt of ancient Norman knights, where the horses are so clothed that only the ears and legs are visible.

came on, but their efforts were unavailing ; the breast-work of lances and shields continued impregnable. It is hard to say how long this might have lasted if the cavalry had not resorted to the old stratagem of a pretended flight. In a moment the Norwegians ceased to be under any kind of control, rushing through the wall of shields, the whole order of their line of defence was broken, and when the cavalry turned back upon them they were cut down and slaughtered in every direction. The fighting continued unabated, but with the Norwegians it was now rather the reckless desperation of the conquered than the orderly courage of a disciplined force. Hardrada might perhaps have rallied them, and he struggled hard to effect it, but he was pierced by an arrow in the neck and fell. Harold took advantage of this occurrence to send his brother Tosty another offer of peace ; it was scoffed at and rejected. Obstinate refusing all quarter, the unhappy man took his station at the side of the forsaken standard, and fought wildly : a brief interval, and he too stretched his length in the dust.

Harold might be supposed now to have achieved his melancholy victory, but all was not over. A detachment arrived to the rescue, under the command of the slain Hardrada's betrothed son-in-law, Erstein Orri, and the fight was renewed ; but this last part of the engagement was only remarkable for the extraordinary bravery of one Norwegian, who killed forty Saxons on the bridge, with his own battle-axe,^y disputing single-

^y Most historians put the defence of the bridge in the earlier part of the engagement, I have followed Lappenburg's history, which is borne out I think by the Saxon Chronicle, and by the geographical position of the field of battle. See also the account of the battle in Henry Huntingdon.

handed the passage of the English troops. A secret, treacherous wound, given from beneath, through a hole in the bridge, deprived him at length of life. Thus the English gained the day. This battle took place on the twenty-fifth of September.

While Harold, over whose career continued ills were pending, was courteously entertaining the survivors among Tosty's adherents, (with whom were Olave, son of the northern king, and Paul, earl of the Orkneys,²) appropriating the large booty that had fallen into his hands, and making other arrangements, the powerful Norman duke had matured his scheme of invasion, and his fleet now lay at S. Valery, on the Somme, only waiting a favourable wind to set sail for England. I must mention a few circumstances which were held to give countenance to the expedition. At an early period William had obtained the pope's consent to it, and the present of a consecrated banner from the holy see.* Why did the pope sanction what must be considered, in some sense, an usurpation? It seems that Harold had shewn no kind of respect either to his authority or, in some cases, even to the laws of the Church. He had not sent to Rome the usual formal notification of his claim to the English crown,^b and former spoliations of Church property lay at his door unredressed. These would not be thought light offences then. I am inclined to believe that the stings of his perjured con-

* Ingulphus.

^a "After considering both sides of the question, the pope sent William a consecrated banner, in token of his right." Roger Wendover's Chronicle. It was a white one, with a cross upon it and the figure of an armed warrior. See Hollinshed and Lappenburg.

^b "Assuming the crown without the authority of the Church, and by this act he made an enemy of pope Alexander, and *all the prelates of England*." Roger Wendover.

science were at the root of the whole matter, they came between him and peace, and made him fearful of too close an inquiry into his rights. His respect to the Church after his accession to the throne, and his kindness to the clergy, prove that he thought it at least desirable to be upon good terms with them.

Nor had duke William been without his own share of difficulties. His Norman barons shewed no disposition to help him after he had himself determined on the conquest of England; they declared that they were not bound to serve beyond the sea, doubted that he would succeed, exaggerated Harold's resources, and affirmed that the "beautiful Normandy would be ruined" by the undertaking.^c This was stated at a conference,^d but not in William's presence, for before him they did not dare to rebel against his will. But they engaged the disappointed baron Fitz-osbern, whose heart was as much set on the enterprise as his master's, to be the bearer of their decision against it. Fitzosborn, however, informed the duke that nothing would give the barons greater pleasure than to support him, and that they would double their supply of armed men on such a glorious occasion! This was a stratagem to overpower their refusal, for he thought that the barons would not dare to contradict him: you may imagine their rage and disappointment at hearing of it. But the trick did not answer; many had the moral courage to disavow what had been said so falsely for them, and William was beginning to despair, when he contrived to gain them at last, by taking them apart one

^c ~~Lapenbary.~~ Also Wace's Chronicle, Taylor's translation, p. 105.
^d ~~Held at Lillebonne.~~

by one, and promising rich rewards in the event of a happy termination to the war.

We have followed them to the coast, but even here the scheme narrowly escaped being frustrated, for the ships lay becalmed for a whole month, and all that William could do or think of failed to keep up the spirits of his soldiers; and provisions fell short. In this emergency he had the relics of S. Valery carried round the town in procession, whether to beguile his men or propitiate the saint seems somewhat doubtful. But, as if Heaven had so willed it for the punishment of Harold and the sins of the English nation, in the same day the breeze arose in the wished-for quarter, and the whole fleet got under weigh. The duke's ship, the *Mora*, led. All that money and labour could do had been lavished upon the fittings of this beautiful vessel, which had been presented to him by his amiable consort Matilda. Her sails were of crimson silk,* at her bows stood the figure of a boy, richly gilded, with his finger pointing towards England, on her mast-head she bore a glittering vane,† beneath which was a lanthorn, to give light by night. The *Mora* was a very fast sailer, so that there was some difficulty in keeping the other ships in her wake. In consequence of this, when the night had passed and the morning dawned, not a sail was to be seen, nothing but sea and sky. This circumstance appears a trifle in our days, when the calculations of nautical science are so true that it is of little importance for one vessel to keep another in view; but then the case was widely different, the use of sails was

* William of Malmesbury.

† A common top-mast decoration of this period. See the description in Strutt of Canute's fleet taken from the *Encomium Emmae*.

badly understood, and duke William feared for the loss of his whole fleet, or perhaps for their defection. He thought it politic, however, to disguise what he felt, but he ordered that the *Mora* should slacken sail until the rest came in sight,^s and many and anxious were his enquiries from time to time of the man who was taking observations at the mast-head. His fears were unnecessary. One, two, three, on they came, as the day advanced, showing like a leafless forest in the depth of winter,^t and on the feast of S. Michael, 1066, they cast anchor off the coast of Kent. It was, as I told you before, a time when trifles were considered in the light of omens, and their import greedily interpreted. Who has not heard of duke William's fall as he set his foot on our shores? With his usual presence of mind he exclaimed, strengthening his asseveration by the common Norman oath,ⁱ "I have seized England with both my hands!" "And here," said one of his knights, giving him a handful of thatch plucked from the nearest cottage, "is the seizin." The significance of this action arose from the custom of transferring estates, by presenting the party taking possession with a small twig or clod of earth, which was called the "seizin." This incident put the army in spirits, and in a short time the whole sixty thousand Normans had poured out of the ships, and stood upon the main land.

A temporary fortification was constructed near Hast-

^s Most accounts say that he cast anchor in mid-channel; I have not repeated this statement, because it seems unlikely.

^t "Like a dense wood," according to Lappenburg, whose descriptions are mostly copied from the *Roman du Rou*. The fleet might well have had this appearance if, as it is given in Strutt's *Ancient Britain*, the number of the vessels reached to 896; but it is thought that this included the small craft, which were very numerous.

ⁱ William's customary oath it is called in Wace's *Chronicle*; see note, p. 170. "Jura par le respendor D^e," or, by the splendour of God.

ings for their accommodation, by William's order, and as his experience made him distrustful of their fidelity, he was bold enough to cut off all power of retreat, by having the ships dismantled and stranded.

Although William's invasion had been long expected by Harold, it nevertheless took him by surprise, for count Baldwin of Flanders, who was William's father-in-law, and interested for him, had caused, from time to time, false accounts of the Norman fleet to be conveyed to the English camp. But when it came in sight, a man of Hastings rode night and day to carry the intelligence.* It could scarcely have arrived at a more unfortunate moment. Not only had the recently dearly-bought victory at Stamford bridge made serious inroads on the strength of the Saxon army, but Harold's injudicious refusal to share the rich spoils with his soldiers and adherents had given great annoyance to them, and caused large numbers to desert. In addition to these untoward circumstances, an impression seems to have existed in more quarters than one, that nothing but misfortune would come to Harold in any meeting with the Norman, on account of his broken faith; and this made the earls Edwin and Morcar stand aloof from assisting him, and his brother Gyrth earnestly entreat him to think better of it, and not to adventure himself into the battle. "Be persuaded," he said, "and reserve yourself for a future contest. You plighted your faith to the Norman duke; how can any force that you can muster avail against a violated oath? If you will allow me to lead your forces, I will willingly sell my life for you, for my conscience is clear." "I am as

* A "Knight of that country." Wace.

disinclined to digest the reproaches of the base as to turn my back upon a Norman," was Harold's unbrotherly reply.¹

As time went on his difficulties increased. A body of Danish troops lent to him by king Sweyn, of Denmark, refused to fight the Normans, alleging that, because of their similarity of descent, they were their fellow-countrymen; and there was a general scarcity of both arms and accoutrements among the men, as well as of horses for the cavalry. Yet, notwithstanding these obstacles, before a fortnight had elapsed Harold took up his ground a few miles from Hastings, at the head of a rapidly-collected force, averaging from ninety to a hundred thousand men.^m In the meantime some slight intercourse had passed between him and his formidable opponent, for the latter had made him four offers of compromise, all of which Harold had refused. One was, that he should give up the kingdom to William altogether; the second, that he should reign over that part north of Humber, holding it of William,—this was like a renewal of the old sub-king arrangement; by the third he was to decide the contest in single combat; the fourth and last proposed that the pope should make the decision:

A curious idea got into the heads of the men whom Harold employed to carry his replies to the Norman camp; they came back and told him that all the Normans were shorn monks, not soldiers. Harold, who knew their bravery, and from his residence abroad was

¹ Camden's Remains. See also the account of this conversation in Wace's Chronicle and elsewhere.

^m In Wace's Chronicle he is made to say "I have four times 100,000 men," to which his brother Gyrth replied "By my faith you have many men; but a great gathering of vilainaille is worth little in battle."

also aware of the continental custom of shaving the upper lip, replied "Do not flatter yourselves that this is the case, depend upon it they are right good fighting men."

It was now evident that an engagement must take place without delay. Duke William's presence with his army had made the country for twenty miles round a waste, notwithstanding his cautions to his soldiers not to spoil a land that must soon be theirs; he might, therefore, well fear the increasing difficulty of restraining or providing for so large an army. Harold, on the other hand, had every reason for wishing to check such formidable ravages; they were desolating his coast. He therefore advanced to a rising ground near Hastings, on the night of the 13th of October, immediately facing the Norman camp. The two armies were now confronted, and no time was to be lost; the night, therefore, was spent in busy preparation for the conflict, and it was one on which both must have felt that life, liberty, and all that was dearest to them depended. Did they both acknowledge that the event was in God's hand? Alas for the Saxons! their good king's dying prediction "neither will they repent, neither will God have mercy upon them," was now to be fearfully verified: they passed the brief interval before the commencement of the fight in drinking and shouting! Hardened by habits of vice, they could not summon a serious thought even upon the threshold of death.ⁿ It

ⁿ It is due to Harold to say that, in Wace's *Brut d'Angleterre*, he is described as going to an early mass before the battle, but as rushing out of the Church in the middle of the service, because some one cried that the duke was under arms and in advance. Another account describes him as riding with Gyrth to survey the Norman army, and galloping back very fast just before the action. These statements may, I think, be reconciled with each other.

was not as with the Normans : their night was spent in solemn religious services. From all we know of the superstitions and the leaders, we must think that this arose more from superstition in the Normans than from real piety. But the position in which they placed themselves was as far distinct from that of the Saxons, that while one party acknowledged and honoured God, the other despised Him.

With the first streak of dawn William girded on his hauberk, a short frock of mail or chain armour, with wide sleeves reaching to the elbow ; the deed was clumsily performed, for he found the back where the front should be. Seeing the superstitious faces of the bystanders, he re-assured them by saying it was a sign - that his fortunes were turned, that of a duke he was soon to become a king."

The way in which the two armies ranged themselves showed a diversity of plans which could hardly be expected from people of late so nearly allied to each other. The Saxons followed their old method, which they had probably learned from the Romans. As far as I may judge the Normans had greatly the advantage in these matters, for the strength of the Saxons depended entirely on their retaining their position unbroken. I do not mean that any fault could be found with their defence, as the sequel will prove it was perfect, but there was no provision to avert the consequences of a breach, if the enemy succeeded in making one. The Normans, on the contrary, were divided into three separate bodies, the bowmen being in front, and the cavalry flanking them on either side, but a little way in the rear ; intermixed with these bodies, were footmen,

bearing lances and axes, with which they annoyed the enemy, retiring, when hard pressed, behind the cavalry. The standard of the Normans was placed under the care of Thorstein, or Tosty, a young man of high courage and descent ; it was with the third division, which was led into battle by William himself. In the Saxon army the banner was the particular charge of the men of London,^o and Harold and his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwin, took their station near it on the right. The rest of the soldiers were ranged behind the shields, as at Stamford bridge, the men of Kent, in accordance with an old privilege, claiming the foremost rank, and bearing the brunt of the attack. Wild cries seem to have been used on either side, to stimulate the soldiers ; among the Saxons it was common in those days to deprive the horses of the power of hearing, lest the excessive shouting should unfit them for service.

A division of Norman cavalry made the first charge, at the head of whom rode the bard Taillefer,^p singing the song of Roland,^q who fell at Roncesvalles, a lay of

* "It was in truth a noble one, sparkling with gold and precious stones." Wace's Chronicle. It is said that it had the figure of a warrior worked upon it. A standard is also noticed in the appendix to the same book, which was represented in the Bayeux tapestry as lying by Harold's feet. This last is in the form of a dragon, and was probably intended for the old dragon standard used by the English from the time of Uther Pendragon.

^p He is mentioned in Robert of Gloucester's curious old Chronicle thus :—

A sueyn that het Taylefer, smot vorth bynore there,
And slou a Englysse man, that a baner bere :
And eftsone another baneur, and the thrydde almost al so
Ac hym sulf he was aslawe ar the dede were ydo.

which (although English) may be translated,

A young man called Taillefer laid about him there
And slew an Englishman that a banner bare,
And soon another banner-man, and the third almost also,
But himself he was slain ere he the deed could do.

See also Henry Huntingdon's account, from which the above was probably taken.

^q Roland was Charlemagne's nephew, and fell gallantly fighting in the pass of Roncesvalles.

the days of Charlemagne.^r As he advanced, brandishing his spear, every eye was upon him ; he performed prodigies of valour, but was soon surrounded by Saxons, and fell covered with wounds. A second and a third charge by the Normans were gallantly received and repelled, and for a length of time it seemed impossible to disturb the order of the English line, and the advantage was certainly on Harold's side, for a great many of the Norman horsemen were driven back upon a deep trench, which had been cut by the Saxons just outside their own defences, and so perished in the sight of their companions. During the intervals of the fight, the magnificent figure of Odo, bishop of Bayeux, was conspicuous, as he rode backwards and forwards on his white horse, animating and encouraging the Normans. He wore a hauberk over his alb, and carried a mace in his hands, but did not join in the fight.^s Nor was duke William wanting either in presence of mind or bravery ; three horses were successively killed under him,^t and, but for the assistance of count Eustace, he would not have been able to recover his position ; indeed for a short time it was generally believed that he was slain.

The tumult deepened ; the Saxon war-cry " Holy Cross, God Almighty " was renewed with deafening violence : as their ranks were thinned down by the Norman bowmen in front, men from behind filled up the gap ; they appeared invincible and impregnable.

^r Andrewes quoting from Spelman.

^s Then Odo, the good priest, the bishop of Bayeux, galloped up, and said to them ' Stand fast, stand fast, be quiet, and move not ! fear nothing, for, if God please, we shall conquer yet.' So they took courage." Wace's Chron. Taylor's Translation. " Wherever he saw most need he led up and stationed the knights." Ibid.

^t Three chosen horses. William of Malmesbury. One was a present from the king of Spain. " Neither arms nor throng did it fear when its lord urged it on." Wace's Chronicle.

The Normans, on the other hand, came on as if their reserves were inexhaustible. Three o'clock arrived ; for six hours the battle had raged unremittingly, with no apparent result. It was now that count Eustace urged the duke to give in, but William refused, for he knew that in his circumstances it would be madness. Although almost left by his own division of cavalry, he coolly surveyed the position of the enemy, and gave directions to the bowmen to take a higher aim, as he saw that their arrows had little effect against the Saxon shields. His next order, after he had succeeded in rallying the cavalry, was that they should appear to fly ; they obeyed, and the effect was electric ; the noble defence of the Saxons was again destroyed by their ungovernable impetuosity,^u and when at the words "Dex aie,"^x the Normans turned upon them, it was plain that the day was lost for Harold. He fell soon after, having received a wound in the eye from an arrow. But even yet the brave Saxons refused to yield, and so fierce was their courage that it seemed as if, at the very last, they might succeed in keeping the field ; but God had decided the contest otherwise, and when twenty Normans dashed forward and seized the English standard,^y bearing it away to their duke, the land had passed to the Conqueror, the Saxon era was no more !

Duke William desired that his tent might be pitched upon the scene of carnage, and his supper prepared there, and it was done : and the Chronicle says "he ate and drank among the dead, and made his bed that night upon

^u "They had built up a fence before them with their shields, with ash and other wood ; and had well joined and wattled in the whole work, so as not to leave a crevice." Wace's Chronicle, p. 176.

^x Dieu aide.

^y Henry Huntingdon.

the field.*" Most probably, too, he slept soundly, for sated ambition reckes little of the human misery through which it attains its goal, it is an intoxication while it lasts, and realises nothing but its own triumph.

Duke William's feelings were somewhat softened in the morning, and he permitted the friends of the slain to seek and claim their dead, with one painful exception, of which we shall speak presently. Stiff and cold upon that battle-field lay the three royal brothers, Harold, Gyrth, and Leofwin, for the two last had defended their kinsman bravely, and were killed in the same fray in which he had fallen ; so ended the line of Godwin, since Harold's remaining brothers took religious vows, and of his five sons, three fled to Ireland, one was taken prisoner by William, and one took refuge with the king of Norway ; nor did they ever again mingle themselves with English affairs. The body of Harold was so disfigured that it could not be identified until his wretched wife had herself joined in the search. She is that Edith who is mentioned not long since as having married Harold after the death of her first husband, Griffith of North Wales.^a This circumstance is not very strongly in her favour, yet the tale of her last act of duty to the deceased king is very touching. She wandered, it is said, long over the field of death, intent

* Wace's Chronicle.

^a Lappenburg says there is a doubt as to whether Edith was really the queen, but his translator, Mr. Thorpe, seems to make no question of the fact. Harold's marriage too with the widow of the Welsh king could hardly have been one of policy, and was, therefore, in all probability one of affection. Her name being Algyth or Edith is also a coincidence, Nor is there any proof of her having been acknowledged queen. Moreover it is a singular fact, if taken in connexion with the above, that so many historians speak of duke William's having urged his daughter's claim *after* Harold's accession, which, if true, shews that he was ignorant of his marriage. Now this marriage had undoubtedly taken place, but may not Harold have kept it quiet, on account of his previous betrothment? which would be a reason for the obscurity in which Edith's position was afterwards involved.

upon her sickening task ; perhaps a ray of hope that he still lived may have given strength to her purpose. Two monks,^b who had been in the king's company just before the action, lent their assistance to her efforts, but so changed was now the form that but a short time since was a model of manly symmetry and vigour, that, when found, they did not recognise it. Edith knew it but too well.

It seems hardly necessary to repeat the traditionary account that life was not extinct, and that, rescued by his friends, Harold lived for many years a recluse, and died a penitent ; I cannot find that it rests upon any certain foundation. That such a tale should gain some credit is not wonderful, when the difficulty of identifying his remains has been considered ; many, indeed, might continue to doubt whether the body found was really his, and a vague belief that he might be still alive would naturally spring from these doubts. It has been generally recorded of William that, when Harold's mother, Githa, begged for her son's body, he refused it to her, although she offered to redeem it at its weight in pure gold, for he said " he should be buried on the sea shore which he had so long guarded ;" but most historians seem to think that he was interred in the abbey of Waltham, which was his own foundation.^c

In the shade of those sacred walls we will leave him, touching but slightly on what was imperfect in his cha-

^b Ailric and Osgod Cnoppe.

^c I would not be supposed to say positively that Harold was buried there, but among conflicting statements it is necessary to choose one, and I have taken that which seemed to be best authenticated. Undoubtedly a body *purporting to be Harold's* was buried at Waltham : this is all we really know now, and nearly all that was known then. The story of the hermit at Chester is in the Harleian MSS. according to Taylor's Appendix to Wace's Chron. where a sketch of it is given, which is so interesting that it makes one wish to believe it.

acter ; it is certain that, with many faults, he had many redeeming qualities, which, under other influences, might have ripened into virtues. But what could be looked for in a son of Godwin and Githa ? Did not his father wantonly violate every law of God and man for gain ? It is known that no place, however holy, was safe from his polluted touch. And his mother, a female herself, could sell defenceless women into the most degrading kind of slavery for a few handfuls of money ! Well might she afterwards offer her wealth in vain for the body of her own son ! It is, then, rather a matter of surprise that Harold was what he was than that he was not what we could have wished him to be. According to the testimony of a foreign (and so unprejudiced) witness, he was “ brave and virtuous, enterprising and courageous.”^d Let us not grudge him the praise of these noble qualities, while we mourn that instead of being consecrated to God’s service they were perverted to the compassing of worldly schemes and objects.

The battle of Hastings was fought on Harold’s birthday, October 14th, 1066, a day on which his mother had predicted that he would be fortunate ; where it was fought Battle abbey once stood, to commemorate the event ; now Battle abbey likewise has been swept away, and the site of its choir is a swamp.^e

So do chance and change alternate with each other, acted and re-acted upon by that vast Design which the religious acknowledge as Providence, the irreligious call Fate.

^d “ Pros ert Heraut e virtuos,
E empernanz e corajoz.”

Quoted in Wace’s Chron. from Benoit de Sainte More. Taylor’s Trans.

^e Palgrave.

And here, before taking a farewell of this interesting period, while I express my conviction that it is no chance which has preserved to us so much belonging to it that is instructive and beautiful, so many precious notices of the lives of God's saints, and holy records of what the teaching and practice of the English Church was in her ages of simplicity and first love, before human reasoning had substituted a false liberty of conscience for obedience and faith, and luxury had weakened the idea of self-sacrifice, let me, at the same time, repeat the hope with which I started that you will strive to retain and perfect a few of these holy lessons, that you will carry away in your hearts a higher sense of individual responsibility as members of the same Church for which these glorious saints laboured, a more humble spirit of submission to her teaching, a deeper love of her sacraments and ordinances.

At least let this thought remain with you, that although the Saxon era has passed away so long that the very facts we have been studying seem more like the wild creations of romance than realities belonging to each of us, as natives of the same favoured soil, inheritors of the same blessed faith, yet are we one in communion with her saints still ; they are not dead, they live to God ; to Whom, if we live, we are living with them, in and through Him, and so living, may reasonably look for a portion of their spirit to do His work here, for a share of their blessedness hereafter.



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